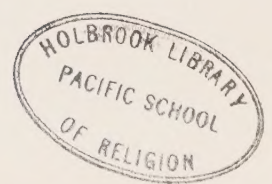
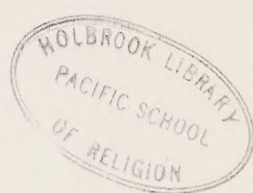




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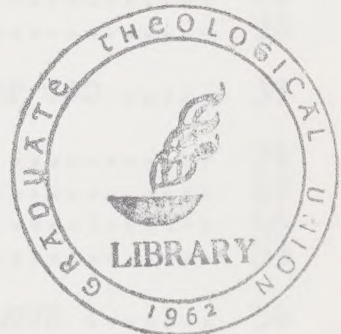
DIVINE LOVE AND THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

by

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CHAPTER I

SIGNIFICANCE OF A DOCTRINE OF CREATION

Know that the Lord is God!
It is he that made us, and we are his ...
... the Lord is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.¹

Our understanding of man depends to a very large extent on our acceptance or rejection of the affirmation which is made throughout the Judeo-Christian literature, namely that man is a creature of God, that he remains forever and inescapably in relationship with God and furthermore that the relationship of the Creator with the creature is rooted in the goodness and the love of God which is 'faithful to all generations'. If this affirmation is true, both man's present experience and his ultimate destiny can be interpreted adequately only in the context of the plan of the Creator for his creature.

If man were created simply as a whim of the Divine in an irresponsible, 'playful' act, he might well find himself upon the earth with no bonds with or responsibility towards his Creator. He would be severed from his point of origin, a free agent in the world into which

¹ Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version, (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1952), Ps. 100:3,5. All Scripture quotations are taken from this translation unless otherwise indicated.

he had been born. This being true, he would be in no responsible relationship to his fellowmen but would be free to associate himself with others in such manner as he might choose either for his personal pleasure or advantage or for the advancement of any social structure which he might deem to be of greater value than his personal interests. His destiny could hardly be seen in terms other than to live and to die and to return to dust and the values by which he would measure life would be temporal values.

If man were a product of the whim of God, he would be free not only in the sense of having free power of decision, but also in the sense that God would have no claim on him. If he originated as a purposeless display of the power of God, he would lack true freedom and in spite of a seeming liberty he would be in reality only the tool or the puppet of God. His destiny would be seen in eternal rather than temporal terms, but this destiny would be determined by the will of God and in no sense by man's choice. The values of life also would be eternal rather than temporal values, but man's choosing amongst them would be determined rather than free. Likewise it is assumed that if he himself were not a free agent, he would not be responsibly related to his fellowmen.

On the other hand, if Scripture is correct that man is neither a product of the whim of God nor a tool of non-purposive power but a creature fashioned by the love and the goodness and the purposeful will of God, then his

relationship both to God and to his fellowmen is quite different. In the first place he is free. If he is made in love he is made for fellowship with God, for this is the meaning of love. Fellowship is a freely established relationship between free individuals. It cannot exist except where there is freedom. However, this is not the empty freedom of unrelatedness, of indifference, of complete separation from the Creator but a responsible freedom, the liberty of choice to accept or to reject the proffered communion with God. This freedom is real. The will of God is not imposed upon us. Nevertheless the creature remains always in relationship with God, always within the circle of the love in which he was created. So long as God loves there can be no dissolution of the bond between the Creator and the creature. Love calls for response. Though the nature of man's response is free he cannot escape the fact of his responsibility. Even in the extremes of rejection of God's love and disobedience to his will, man is not separated from the outreaching love and concern of his Creator.

Such a doctrine of creation will have far-reaching effects on our understanding of the meaning of life and of our relationship with our fellows. If the acts of God are acts of integrity rather than caprice, then God's act in creation is purposive and man's life will be understood to have meaning relative to the plan and purpose of God. Values in temporal experience will be

measured in terms of eternal values. Furthermore, if man is created in love he is created to love. He is called to respond to God's love with love towards God and towards his fellows. This love is not a 'virtue' which man can come by through his own effort. It is a way of life, a way of being related to others and its source is not in the individual but in the love of God to which he responds. This is the fact to which Brunner calls attention in his discussion of goodness and the virtues when he writes:

...as life in love is a life which flows from the love of God, so also the individual virtue, as a particular manifestation of the one goodness, is always something which flows from another dimension, namely from the fact of life as determined by the existence of our neighbour. For to live in love means concretely to allow one's life to be determined by the existence of others, by being "subject" to their needs and demands.¹

It is only as we see creation to be the loving work of God that we find ourselves drawn to God and to our brothers in a fellowship of love.

A doctrine of creation is essential also for a doctrine of salvation. If creation were without purpose and plan there could be no question of salvation. Life would be without meaning and its end death. If man were created by the divine will apart from love, salvation would

¹ Emil Brunner, The Divine Imperative, trans. Olive Wyon, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), p. 166 f.

be based on 'merit' or grounded in the arbitrary will of God. If man is created in love, then salvation is the restoration of a broken fellowship effected by the unmeasured outpouring of God's forgiving love, freely given and freely received. There can be no question of forgiveness in any relationship which is not based on love.

An inquiry into the nature of divine creativity leads logically to a consideration of the question of man's power to create. If creation is an expression of divine love, is human love also creative? If communion between God and man is established through God's creative and forgiving love, is it divine love working in man which creates true fellowship amongst men? If creation and redemption are interlocking expressions of the love of God for man, does God's love, accepted by man, have the power of restoration, of re-creation and redemption in the area of inter-personal relations?

An adequate doctrine of creation is a fundamental part of a doctrine of God; it is basic to our understanding of life and its meaning. Such a doctrine may also cast light on the problem of creativity in the field of human relations.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL NOTES

No man endowed with powers of observation and a questioning mind can escape the query, Where did it all come from? What is the source of the world about me? Who am I? Where did I come from? What is my relation to my fellow creatures and what is our relation to the seen and the unseen world in which we live? What is our origin, our life, our destiny? These questions are not reserved to the philosopher. In one way or another they are asked by every child as he reaches out his hand to the world about him; they are asked by primitive peoples who, because they are men, cannot help but wonder.

Primitive Peoples

The idea of a far-off creator god is common amongst primitive peoples and probably arose very early. For the most part this god is impersonal or at least not in direct relationship with man. He represents an almost inescapable pre-philosophical answer to the universal question, What is the source of all things? but he lacks the reality of the spirits with whom man must deal in his daily experience. Some primitive peoples believe that this high god once lived on earth and walked amongst his people, but he later removed himself from them and now rarely if ever

has active dealings with them though he is aware of all that happens. Noss cites two possible exceptions to this pattern, that of the Australian bushmen, some of whom pray to the supreme god for food and that of the South American Fuegians who saw in him the cause of all deaths.¹ It would be of interest to know whether the prayers for food, a basic need for the sustaining of life, are addressed to the creator god on the assumption that he who is creator must of necessity be the sustainer also, or whether it is simply a prayer that he who possesses the power of creation shall bring forth fruit from the earth. If the former is true, it will be seen that the great god not only creates but cares for his creatures. The bulk of evidence suggests, however, that for primitive man the conception of a creator god provides an answer to the question of origins but does not present itself as a religious reality.²

Babylonia

The tablets giving the Babylonian creation myth are incomplete, but they go far enough to name Marduk as the creator god who fashioned the world of plants and animals, who set the stars in motion in their courses and planned the creation of man.

1 John B. Noss, Man's Religions, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1949), p. 20.

2 Ibid., p. 21.

My blood will I take and bone will I fashion,
I shall create man who shall inhabit the earth.¹

These creative acts were preceded by Marduk's victory over Tiamat, ruler of the forces of chaos. According to Noss, this priestly account was based on the much earlier Sumerian legends of a primeval conflict between the dragons of darkness and chaos and the gods of light and order.² Throughout this mythology, in both its Sumerian and Babylonian form, the known universe is seen as an ordered universe and creation is described as the bringing of order out of chaos.

The Creator Gods of Indian Philosophy (8th-9th centuries B.C.)

Priests of the Vedic period pursued the question of origins and their solution to the problem begins to appear in the figures of the creator gods named in the later hymns of the Rig-Veda. Sometimes the creator is given a name and appears as a personal creator god; in one hymn, however, creation is attributed to a neutral cosmic principle prior to the gods, prior to the universe, prior even to being and non-being. Creation was not the bringing of

¹ Noss, op. cit., p. 56, quoted from R. W. Rogers, The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria, (New York: Eaton and Mains, 1908), p. 129.

² Ibid., p. 55.

order out of chaos; it was absolute creation.

Darkness was hidden in a deeper darkness;
This All was as a sea without dimensions;
The void still held unformed what was potential,
Until the power of Warmth produced the sole One.¹

The priests were beginning to think in philosophical terms, but they recognized the inadequacies of their knowledge.

Whether he made the world or did not make it,
He knows whence this creation came, he only
Who in highest heaven guards and watches;
He knows indeed, but then, perhaps, he knows
not!²

The world is real, however. It is evolved from God and is not a purposeless phantasm.³

Such was the status of priestly thought during the eighth and ninth centuries, and perhaps much earlier.⁴ The Brahmins carried the Vedic theories of creation another step forward and saw in the Lord of Creatures both a personal creator god and the ultimate power of the universe, Brahma Svayanibhu (Brahma Self-existing).⁵ This idea is developed further in the Upanishads which deal with the question of the nature of reality and the meaning of life and experience. The predominant view in these treatises is monistic.

1 Noss, op. cit., p. 112 (quoted).

2 Ibid., (quoted).

3 S. Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, (New York: Macmillan Co., rev. ed., 1929), I, pp. 99-105.

4 Ibid., p. 67.

5 Noss, op. cit., p. 115.

There is one and only one self-existent reality which is the ground of all being, material and spiritual, human and divine. This reality is known as Brahma (the Vedic holy power of prayer) or as Brahman (ultimate reality).

Brahma is conceived of variously as a personal deity or as impersonal reality, though in the early Upanishads "It" is usually the impersonal ground of all being, the source and final destiny of all that is.

Brahma is not only the source of all, but all that is - both the objective world of the senses and the subjective world of feelings - is itself Brahma. Creator and creature are not distinct in any absolute sense. The self is Brahma - the human self, the animal self, the plant self - and in its dissolution it is still Brahma. The identity is not complete, however, for though Brahma is all and all is Brahma, it may still be said that the universe is a reality derived from and pervaded by Brahma; in this sense objects and individuals are created by or at least emanate from Brahma. Later in the literature of the Vedanta even this distinction is lost. The universe is either illusion or the "play" of Brahma and the term "creation" ceases to have meaning.¹

In general the philosophies of India have not dealt extensively with the problem of creation, but it has been pointed out that at least four theories are pres-

1 Noss, op. cit., pp. 114-119.

ent in the Upanishads:

(1) that matter exists from eternity independently of God, which He fashions but does not create; (2) that God creates the universe out of nothing, and the latter is independent of God though it is His creation; (3) that God creates the universe by transforming Himself into it; (4) that God alone is real, and there is no creation at all.¹

That which really matters is the complete self-sufficiency of Brahma:

The Upanishads fight shy of the conception of an omnipotent mechanic fashioning pre-existing matter into the universe. If God excludes matter, even though the latter is reduced to a mere potentiality, we cannot escape dualism, since God would remain opposed to matter....For the Upanishads both form and matter, the ever active consciousness and the passive non-consciousness are aspects of a single reality....The whole world is conceived as possessing an identity of purpose as well as a common substratum of change....Brahman is the sole and the whole explanation of the world, its material and efficient cause.²

As Dasgupta describes this philosophy it seems that all duality is contained within this single unity. Brahman, the one ultimate reality, creates all categories and all material objects by its own self-transformation. Creation is a continuing, eternal expression of the power of God. This divine power has the character of Will or

1 Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 118 f., presenting a summary of an analysis by Deussen.

2 Ibid., p. 182.

Idea which expresses itself spontaneously and irresistibly.¹ These philosophies stress the absolute independence of the divine power. The Lord may act in accordance with the desire or impulse of the given moment. There is no suggestion that these acts will conform to any regularity or stability in the nature of the deity. Creation may be simply the result of the playful activity, the krida or lila of God.²

It may be presumed that the creation has no purpose if it came into being through a non-purposive act. The philosophy of Vijnana Bhiksu is quite specific about the spontaneity of the creative act:

This activity of God is an eternal activity, an eternal creative impulse which is absolutely without any extraneous purpose....It proceeds from the spontaneous joy of God in a spontaneous manner like the process of breathing, and has no reference to the fulfilment of any purpose. In the Vyasa-bhasya it is said that the creation of God is for the benefit of living beings. But Bhiksu does not support any purpose at all. This activity is sometimes compared with the purposeless playful activity. But Bhiksu says that even if there is any slight purpose in play that also is absent in the activity of God. The action also proceeds spontaneously with the creative desire of God, for which no body or senses are necessary. He is identical with the whole universe

1 Surendranath Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), III, p. 36 f.

2 Ibid., p. 51.

and as such His action has no objective outside of Himself, as in the case of ordinary actions.¹

The world of matter and souls exists in God "as pure consciousness" in its uncreated state; it becomes manifest in the stage of creation and returns into the consciousness of God in the stage of dissolution.² Thus there is no creation in any true sense of the word. There are only manifestations of that which exists in the divine consciousness.

In Jainism, arising in the sixth century B. C., there is no theory of creation as such. The Jains do not believe in a divine creative being. If a god can be conceived of as uncreated so can all things be self-existent.³ Therefore Jainism developed an ethic which is both atheistic and unconcerned for the neighbor as a neighbor. It deals wholly with the salvation of the individual soul by an extreme asceticism which regards the material world, the body and all of its desires and impulses as evil. The prohibition against killing any living creature or against lying, covetousness and so forth arises not from reverence for life or concern for one's neighbor as a fellow creature of God but from the desire to save one's own soul. Such an ethic differs radically from that of the

1 Dasgupta, op. cit., p. 452.

2 Ibid., p. 458.

3 Radhakrishnan, op. cit., pp. 329 ff.

Christian faith in which our relations with one another are viewed in the light of a doctrine of creation which proclaims us to be children of one Father and brothers to one another.

Zoroastrianism (c. 600 B.C.)

The Indo-Europeans who settled in the Iranian highlands brought forth a religion which differed markedly from that of their kinsfolk who travelled on into the east, there to develop the varied philosophies of India. Zoroaster, more properly known as Zarathustra, altered the beliefs and the religious practices of the seventh century Iranians and converted them to the highly moral faith which bears his name. Zarathustra proclaimed one supreme deity and taught that all things had come into being through the will of Ahura Mazda. This doctrine of creation was not adhered to by later followers of the faith, but the prophet himself ascribed the origin of all things including darkness and light, evil and good, to Mazda, "creator of all things through the holy spirit." It is also the creator god, the absolute, who "calls the understanding man to his duty."¹ Thus Zoroastrianism in its earliest form was a true ethical monotheism. In later years it suffered much distortion. The Zoroastrian conception of the origin of evil is not clear. In some sense Ahura Mazda is respon-

1 Noss, op. cit., p. 452.

sible for Angra Mainyu the evil spirit, but possibly only in the sense that shadow must fall wherever there is light. In the later development of the faith, evil appears as a spirit which has been present always in opposition to Ahura Mazda.¹

Plato
(427-347 B.C.)

Plato makes no definitive statement as to the manner of creation by the Creator God or the relation between the ideal forms or Ideas and created beings. The creation myth in the *Timaeus* presents the clearest picture, but since it is not put into the mouth of Socrates himself it is possible that this represents only an idea with which the philosopher was toying. According to the myth, the Creator God is responsible for the world but has not created it directly. The world is not eternal but created and if it is created it must be created by a cause. The world is created according to a plan and on the basis of an eternal pattern. The Creator is good and he desires that his creation shall be good.

Let me tell you then why the creator of the world generated and created this universe. He was good, and no goodness can ever have any jealousy of anything. And being free from jealousy, he desired that all things should be as like himself as possible. This is the true beginning of creation and of

1 Noss, op. cit., p. 453 f.

the world....God desired that all things should be good and nothing bad as far as this could be accomplished...out of disorder he brought order, considering that this was far better than the other. Now he who is the best neither creates nor ever has created anything but the fairest...he put intelligence in soul, and soul in body, and framed the universe to be the best and fairest work of nature.¹

Creation is accomplished through the demiurge.

Mortal beings are not to be created by the Creator God, for if they were they would be eternal and on an equality with the gods. Therefore the gods themselves are to create the mortal beings. In doing so they are to imitate the creative power of God. The Creator God gives to the lesser gods the divine and immortal part "which is the guiding principle of those who are willing to follow justice and the gods"² and the demiurge is charged with the responsibility of weaving this immortal part with the mortal and so to "make and beget living creatures, and give them food, and make them to grow, and receive them again in death."³

Evil originates with the lesser gods though it is planned for by God Himself. Though He desires only good for the creature, He gives instructions that mortals "must have love, which is a mixture of pleasure and pain; also

1 Plato, "Timaeus," The Dialogues of Plato, Trans. B. Jowett, (Boston: The Jefferson Press, n.d.) II, p. 524 f.

2 Ibid., p. 534.

3 Ibid.

fear and anger, and the feelings which are akin or opposite to them; if they conquered these they would live righteously, and if they were conquered by them, unrighteously."¹ Thus God is accounted guiltless of future evil in the created world. Likewise, all guidance of mortals is assigned to the lesser gods.

Goodness resides in God and He is the direct source of the divine in all things, having given the immortal principle of the soul to the lesser gods, charging them to incorporate it into a mortal body. The divine patterns or Ideas of Plato are not created by God but are themselves eternal. They are not real forces which can act either directly or indirectly in the world. The creature may strive upward but the divine does not reach downward. Man is a soul in a body. These two parts are distinct and the body exists only for the sake of the soul. God is the primary cause of creation, responsible for the divine soul; the lesser gods are the secondary causes, responsible for the body.

Wherefore we may distinguish two sorts of causes, the one divine and the other necessary, and may seek for the divine in all things, as far as our nature admits, for the sake of the blessed life; but the necessary kind only for the sake of the divine, considering that without them and when isolated from them these higher

1 Plato, op. cit., p. 535.

things for which we look cannot be apprehended or received or in any way attained by us.¹

There is a cleft between the two worlds. God is not indifferent to men. He judges them but He does not reach down to them. They must reach up.

Plotinus
(205-270 A. D.)

Plotinus departs rather radically from Plato at this point. In his philosophy there is motion in two directions. The continuing creative activity of the world-soul is the descent from God to matter in the act of creation. Corresponding to this is the ascent of man to God which is the act of salvation. This change reflects the Alexandrian view of the world which had developed since the time of Plato. According to this view there is a distinct dualism between God and matter; the cleft between them, however, is no longer a void but is filled with intermediate beings through whom communication is established.

Creation is by emanation from the One. All things proceed from the Divine and return again to the One.

This is especially true of the world-soul and its creative activity. That which the world-soul has beheld of the things above, in the intelligible world, it seeks to reproduce in the empirical world. But in this process of receiving from the higher and caring for the lower, there is so far nothing degrading

1 Plato, op. cit., p. 560.

or defiling; it is the soul's normal condition, so to speak, and the soul is quite at liberty to mount up again to the archetype after which it has created it.¹

The Old Testament

The earliest Old Testament references to God's creation of the world are in Psalm 104 and in the Book of Job. According to Pfeiffer, the former is based on Ikhnaton's Hymn to Aton.² Egyptians as early as 2000 B.C. acclaimed God as the creator of heaven and earth and the sustainer of all that is.³ Psalm 104 is a magnificent hymn of praise to the creator of the heavens and the earth. God is addressed both as Creator of all nature, animate and inanimate and as the Lord who rules over his creation.

Bless the Lord, O my soul!
 O Lord, my God, thou art very great!
 ...who hast stretched out the heavens like
 a tent,
 ...who makest the winds thy messengers,
 fire and flame thy ministers.
 Thou didst set the earth on its foundations,
 ...The mountains rose, the valleys sank down
 to the place thou didst appoint
 for them.
 ...Thou makest springs gush forth in the
 valleys;
 Thou dost cause the grass to grow for the
 cattle and plants for man to
 cultivate,
 ...

1 Anders Nygren, Agape and Eros, Trans. P. S. Watson, (London: SPCK, 1953), p. 190.

2 Robert H. Pfeiffer, Introduction to the Old Testament, (New York: Harper & Eros., 1941), p. 688.

3 Ibid., p. 36.

O Lord how manifold are thy works!
 In wisdom thou hast made them all;
 the earth is full of thy
 creatures.
 ...When thou sendest forth thy Spirit,
 they are created.
 ...May the Lord rejoice in his works,
 who looks on the earth and it trembles,
 who touches the mountains and they smoke!
 ...Praise the Lord!

(Ps. 104)

The God of the Psalmist holds his creation in the hollow of his hand and it responds to his touch.

Likewise in Job, possibly dating from the sixth century B. C.¹ God is the Almighty who commands and the earth is formed and obeys his will:

...he who removes mountains, and they
 know it not...
 who commands the sun, and it does not rise...
 who alone stretched out the heavens, and
 trampled the waves of the sea.
 (Job 9:58)

It is he who gives life to the living:

Who among all these does not know that the
 hand of the Lord has done this?
 In his hand is the life of every living thing
 and the breath of all mankind.
 (Job 12:9 f.)

Furthermore, God has made the earth not by chance or in playfulness but in wisdom.

Whence then comes wisdom?
 And where is the place of understanding?
 ...God understands the way to it, and he
 knows its place.
 For he looks to the ends of the earth and
 sees everything under the
 heavens.

1 Pfeiffer, op. cit., p. 677.

When he gave to the wind its weight,
 ...then he saw it and declared it;
 he established it and searched it out.
 (Job 28:20-27)¹

It is to be noted that wisdom itself does not originate in God but that he "saw it and declared it." Wisdom is an ultimate beyond God on which he patterned the universe. Wisdom itself is apparently original as are the Ideas of Plato.

Throughout the Psalms, in one form and another the declaration is repeated:

The earth is the Lord's and the fulness
 thereof,
 the world and those who dwell therein.
 (Ps. 24:1 f.)

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made,
 And all their host by the breath of his mouth...
 For he spoke and it came to be;
 he commanded and it stood forth.
 (Ps. 33:6,9)

Furthermore, God not only creates by his Word, he remains close to his creation.

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
 Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
 ...even the darkness is not dark to thee,
 the night is bright as the day:
 for darkness is as light with thee.
 (Ps. 139:7,12)

He can deal with the universe as he wills:

Whatever the Lord pleases he does,
 in heaven and on earth,

¹ Pfeiffer, op. cit., p. 672 discusses the problem of the authenticity of this chapter on divine wisdom. His interpretation that it is an independent writing by the same author would still place it in this early period of Old Testament literature.

in the seas and all deeps.

(Ps. 135:6)

Great is our Lord, and abundant in power;
his understanding is beyond measure....
He sends forth his command to the earth;
his word runs swiftly.

(Ps. 147:5,15)

Creation as described in Job is not primary creation, ex nihilo, but a bringing forth of form and order out of chaos. Chaos included the basic elements of air, water and fire and God imposed order on these elements according to the pattern of eternal wisdom.

...he gave to the wind its weight,
and meted out the waters by measure;
...he made a decree for the rain,
and a way for the lightning of the thunder.
(Job 28:25f.)

God then "laid the foundation of the earth" (38:4) and "shut in the sea with doors" (38:8), commanding them by his Word, "'thus far shall you come and no farther'" (38:11). Sun, moon and stars, wind and wave and the solid earth are brought forth out of chaos and bound by his command.

Do you know the ordinances of the heavens?
Can you establish their rule on the earth?
...Who has put wisdom in the clouds,
or given understanding to the mists?
(Job 38:33,36)

Man also is the creation of God, and not only man generically, but each individual man.

Did not he who made me in the womb make him?
And did not one fashion us in the womb?
(Job 31:15)

Or again,

Thy hands fashioned and made me...thou hast made me of clay....Thou didst clothe me

with skin and flesh, and knit me
together with bones and sinews. Thou
hast granted me life....

(10:8-12)

God has conquered chaos with wisdom and his dominion over
his creation is complete.

He is unchangeable and who can turn him?
What he desires, that he does.

(23:13)

The story of creation in the second chapter of
Genesis is early mythology; its source is undoubtedly in
folklore current well before the tenth century.¹ It can-
not be classified properly as philosophical speculation on
the origin of the world. However, the myth rests on the
assumption that even this highly anthropomorphic God is the
source of all being and the breath of life.

In the day that the Lord God made the
earth and the heavens....then the Lord
God formed man of dust from the ground,
and breathed into his nostrils the
breath of life; and man became a liv-
ing being.

(Gen. 2:4,7)

The priestly account of creation, probably written
some five hundred years after the story in the second chap-
ter of Genesis, is an orderly, speculative description of
the process of creation, step by step. According to this
document creation is accomplished by the Word of God.

God said, 'Let there be light'; and
there was light....And God said, '...
let the dry land appear.' And it was so.

(Gen. 1:3,9)

1 Pfeiffer, op. cit., p. 166.

Discrepancies and incongruities in the account suggest that it rests on an earlier mythology, edited to include teachings found in the Psalms and in Job which in turn are based on beliefs coming out of ancient Egypt.

Creation may or may not be regarded as ex nihilo depending on the interpretation of the opening verse,¹ "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). In either case, however, creation is a spiritual act, not a warring against the dragons of chaos (Babylonian mythology), nor a moulding of clay to fashion the inhabitants of the earth (Gen. 2). This is a religious account. God the Creator is clothed in majesty; he speaks and his will is done; he looks at that which he has created, and "behold, it was very good" (1:30); he is Lord of his creation.

This is the high point of the Old Testament doctrine of creation - creation by the Word of God. Such a doctrine was at least hinted at in ancient Egyptian and Babylonian writings. It is suggested in one passage in the Book of Job when the boundary of the seas is set simply by divine command (38:11). Second Isaiah developed the teaching further:

I made the earth and created man upon it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host.

(Is. 45:12)

1 Pfeiffer, op. cit., p. 194.

or again,

My hand laid the foundation of the
earth, and my right hand spread out
the heavens; when I call to them, they
stand forth together.

(Is. 48:13)

These writings form part of the background of the priestly documents which in turn lie back of Christian teaching:

By faith we understand that the world
was created by the word of God, so that
what is seen was made out of things
which do not appear.

(Heb. 11:3)

Pfeiffer notes also that it is in Second Isaiah that the verb 'to create' is first found used exclusively in the sense of 'divine effortless activity'. It does not occur in Job. Earlier literature, such as the substratum of the first chapter of Genesis, apparently used 'to divide' or 'to make' rather than a verb which might mean true creation.¹

The New Testament

The New Testament assumes the fatherhood of God; creation is by his will. So Paul admonished the people of Lystra, "...you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them" (Acts 14:15). He wrote of "the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things" (Eph. 3:9) and of "the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will" (Eph. 1:11).

1 Pfeiffer, op. cit., p. 194.

This seems to be true creation, by divine fiat as God "calls into existence the things that do not exist " (Rom. 4:17).

The prologue to the gospel of John identifies this divine creativity with the Logos or the Word of God.

In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made.

(Jn. 1:1-3)

This again is true creation, ex nihilo. In the beginning was the Word, the expressed will of God, not chaos or primordial matter to which God would give order and form: "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth" (Jas. 1:18). This is the same thought which is expressed in the apocrypha in the Second Book of Maccabees:

I beseech you, my child, to look up at the heavens and the earth, and see all that is in them, and perceive that God did not make them out of the things that existed, and in that way the human race came into existence.

(II Macc.7:28)¹

The epistle to the Hebrews is less clear in this regard: "By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear" (Heb. 11:3). However, no attempt is made to describe the 'things which do not appear'. The book of Revelation reiterates the theme of creation ex nihilo: "thou didst create all things and by thy will they

¹ J.M.P. Smith et al., The Complete Bible, An American Translation, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939).

existed and were created" (Rev. 4:11).

Creation through the Word became for Paul creation through Christ.

...for us there is one God, the Father,
from whom are all things and for whom
we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ,
through whom are all things and through
whom we exist.

(I Cor. 8:6)

Here is the pre-existent Christ, the expressed will of the living God, the divine Word hypostasized.

...for in him all things were created,
in heaven and on earth, visible and
invisible, whether thrones or domin-
ions or principalities or authorities -
all things were created through him
and for him. He is before all things,
and in him all things hold together.

(Col. 1:15 ff.)

This viewpoint is expressed also in the epistle to the Hebrews (1:1f.).

Such creation is not limited by the bounds of time and space. Creation is a continuing act. The Creator is faithful to his creature (I Pet. 4:19); his is the power to give life to the dead (Rom. 4:17); he may create "new heavens and a new earth" (II Pet 3:13; Rev. 21:1; cf. Is. 65:17).

God not only creates, he may re-create or create anew. This new creation is accomplished also through Christ: "Therefore if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself" (II Cor. 5:17).

The gospel record itself bears witness throughout to the power of God to re-create his creatures through his living Word.

Later Teachings

The early doctrines of the church state anew the theme of creation through the pre-existent Christ, the second person of the trinity.

We believe in one God, the Father All-sovereign, the maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ...Son only-begotten, First-born of all creation, begotten of the Father before all the ages, through whom also all things were made...¹

The creed of Eusebius and the later Nicene creed both speak of Jesus Christ "through whom all things were made," but in the creed of Eusebius it appears that the Son is a part of creation, "First-born of all creation" whereas at Nicaea this phrase is eliminated and the Son is now recognized as "the only-begotten Son of God,...begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father."²

Islam teaches that the universe was created out of nothing, by the will of Allah. Allah is One. There is no other eternal, self-subsistent, uncreated being. A

1 Henry Bettenson, ed., Documents of the Christian Church, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 35. This wording from the creed suggested by Eusebius of Caesarea served as the basis for the creed adopted by the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.

2 Ibid., p. 37.

trinitarian God is inconceivable to the Moslem. Allah, the indivisible, creates ex nihilo.¹

The rise of modern science in the eighteenth century led to a questioning of the intimacy of God's relation with the universe. The teachings of the church seemed not to hold up in the face of the new knowledge of a highly predictable mechanistic order. Many learned men rejected all belief in the providence of God, in a God who is concerned with men and events in history. This was the inception of Deism. Creation for the Deist was not continuing creation but only an act of God "in the beginning." Thereafter the universe and its inhabitants were on their own within a framework of mechanistic natural law.² Such a doctrine of creation was little more than a concession to the past. Certainly it made no demands on a man and bore no relation to his present existence.

The Origin of Life

Plato's account of creation as given in the *Timaeus* holds that living beings are fashioned by the demiurge not by the Creator God. This is Plato's way of accounting for the fact that living beings are mortal and are not on an equality with God. The Creator God, however, does contribute the divine part which is to be

1 Noss, op. cit., pp. 726, 755.

2 Ibid., p. 694 f.

mingled with the mortal in the earthly creature.

According to the earlier creation story in Genesis, God himself fashions the living creatures, using the raw materials of the earth and giving them life.

...then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being...out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air...and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman....
(Gen. 2:7,19,22)

One verse suggests the alternative explanation that God does not of himself create living things, but that he creates the earth and causes the earth to bring them forth: "And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree..." (Gen. 2:9). This is the theme which prevails in the later story in the first chapter of Genesis: "And God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation...'" (v. 11); "'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures...'" (v. 20); "'Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kinds...'" (v. 24). This is creation by the Word of God; by divine command God causes his creation itself to give rise to living plants and animals. They are creatures of the earth and the sky and the sea though they are also God's creatures. It is otherwise with the creation of man. Here is no description of the forming of man from the dust of the earth and woman from the rib of the man, nor any command that the earth shall itself bring forth the human creature. The priestly writers placed man in a

different category as a special creation and they give us only the unelaborated statement: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). Man is quite simply a child of God.

Biologists as well as priests and story tellers have concerned themselves with the question of the origin of life. They have seen two possible explanations: life is either of supernatural origin, arising by special creation, or it arises from the natural order by spontaneous generation. Scientists would prefer to find a satisfactory explanation within the order of nature and spontaneous generation has been a very attractive theory. For years it seemed apparent that living creatures do arise spontaneously out of mud and water and decaying matter. This was accepted by such observers as Aristotle, Newton and William Harvey. Furthermore, as pointed out by Dr. George Wald in a recent article,¹ this theory did not conflict with the account in Genesis in which we are told that the earth and the water brought forth life at God's bidding. Theologians were able to accept the view of the scientists for, as Wald states, "since this directive was never

¹ George Wald, "The Origin of Life," Scientific American, CXCI (Aug., 1954), 44-53. Dr. Wald is an eminent member of the Department of Biology at Harvard University.

rescinded, there is nothing heretical in believing that the process has continued."¹ The theory was challenged during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and finally was refuted effectively by Louis Pasteur. The matter seemed settled after some two hundred years of debate and experiment. The answer left a void. To believe in spontaneous generation had become impossible; to believe in supernatural creation was an offense to reason. There was no other alternative and yet the inquiring mind remained unsatisfied.

The question of the possibility of spontaneous generation has been reopened in recent years in a new form. Wald poses the problem thus:

What the controversy...showed to be untenable is only the belief that living organisms arise spontaneously under present conditions. We have now to face a somewhat different problem: how organisms may have arisen spontaneously under different conditions in some former period, granted that they do so no longer.²

The question becomes now not one of continuing spontaneous generation but of a spontaneous generation which may have occurred only once. Inquiring into this possibility, scientists are now studying the chemical reactions which would be necessary to produce living substance from non-living materials. The essential steps have been outlined in

1 Wald, op. cit., p. 45.

2 Ibid., p. 46.

theory; some have been tested experimentally. Amino acids, basic components of living things, have been formed by circulating simple inorganic substances past an electrical discharge which simulates lightning. It is suggested that the sea in its early condition, uninhabited by living organisms, would offer theoretically the conditions most suitable for the origin of life. Lightning flashes might suffice to initiate the process.¹

The biochemist, pushing forward on an exciting new approach to an age-old question still hears a priestly voice repeat the story, "And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures'" (Gen. 1:20).

Alfred North Whitehead

Philosophers also continue to search for a satisfying explanation of the meaning of creation. The work of Whitehead may be taken as an example of such speculation. Whitehead describes creation as a process in which permanence and change are two aspects of the same reality. God is not the creator, but he enters into the creative process in a similar two-fold manner. God is the 'Principle of Concretion' imposing limits on the possibilities of eternal objects in order that they may become actual. Thus in his primordial nature God is responsible for the aspect of permanence in creation. He is responsible also for the

1 Wald, op. cit., pp. 50-52.

aspect of change or passage, however, for in his consequent nature he is the principle of perfection, leading the world toward the ideal which is the norm for each event. God is not responsible for evil; he is the savior of the world, guiding it towards perfect truth and goodness and beauty.

Creativity is not a quality, with a character of its own; it is simply the process of passage into novelty. All relationships in the ongoing process are actively creative. God is the actual, non-temporal entity in whom is the unity of the universe. Through limitations he permits eternal things to become concrete and in this sense he calls the world into being; as the 'poet of the world' and the norm of all worth, he preserves that which is of value and draws the world towards the ideal beyond the actual. He makes a difference in events as any actual entity makes a difference in them. Only in this manner is God the creator. The world creates God as truly as God creates the world, for these contrasting opposites are equally necessary to the creative process which brings forth both unity and novelty.

Each actuality and each event is born of the past, determined by the past and bearing its content and determined likewise by its relation to others in the chain of events, yet it is also unique, able to react to the future

in an independent way.¹

Its companions of the moment leave it to work out its own destiny so that Creativity itself is ever determined afresh by its own creatures. God tries to persuade the world at each occasion to such perfection as is possible for it. But the extent to which each occasion surrenders is not for him to determine. Spontaneity and originality of decision belong to the essence of each occasion.²

The creative process is not the work of an 'alien Deity'; it is a process in which all nature shares. Every event holds the opportunity for creative advance, but the freedom of the world is such that the opportunity may be abused or forfeited. If God is not Creator in the absolute sense of bringing into being the totally new, he is nevertheless Creator in the sense that there can be no actuality apart from him.

The religious insight is the grasp of this truth: That the order of the world, the depth of reality of the world, the value of the world in its whole and in its parts, the beauty of the world, the zest of life, the peace of life, and the mastery of evil, are all bound together - not accidentally, but by reason of this truth: that the universe exhibits a creativity with infinite freedom, and a realm of forms with infinite possibilities; but that this creativity and

1 Julius S. Bixler, "Whitehead's Philosophy of Religion," The Philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, ("Library of Living Philosophers," III, Evanston: Northwestern University, 1941), pp. 489-511.

2 Ibid., p. 499.

these forms are together impotent to achieve actuality apart from the completed ideal harmony, which is God.¹

Hocking criticizes Whitehead's explanation of change on the same ground that he criticizes the principle of emergence, namely that it is quite inadequate to say that novelty arises because the world has a tendency for novelty. He would still ask Whitehead: What is this creativity, this 'permanence and process'?² The reply may be stated perhaps in Whitehead's often quoted words, "The creativity of the world is in the throbbing emotion of the past hurling itself into a new transcendent fact."³

The question must be pushed further: What emotion and from what source?

Men have been challenged through the ages by the question of origins and in various times and places they have given various answers. There have been theories of creation through a remote creator God who set the world in motion in some distant past but who retains no immediate relationship to it. Creation is a completed act and the world sustains and perpetuates itself. This conception is encountered both in the Deism of the eighteenth century and

1 Bixler, op. cit., p. 496, quoting Whitehead, Religion in the Making, pp. 119 f.

2 William E. Hocking, "Mind and Nature," Schlipp, op. cit., p. 400 f.

3 Schlipp, op. cit., p. 359, quoting Whitehead, Adventures of Ideas, p. 227.

in the belief in an impersonal creator God which occurs amongst primitive peoples. The religions of India offer several contrasts to this view. Here we find a pantheism which declares that Brahma is all and all is Brahma, or there is the conception that the world is not a creation but a completely spontaneous, meaningless expression of the consciousness of God, or again, in Jainism, the idea that the world may be self-existent even as God is self-existent.

Plato proposed that God is responsible for the world but only indirectly as he has given to the lesser gods divine elements to be used in the creation and instructions concerning the fashioning of the creatures. God remains judge over the creation but he does not reach down to redeem it. Plotinus altered this conception and taught that creation is by emanation from God and that in the end all returns again to the One. The idea that creation is a bringing of order out of chaos occurs repeatedly, but other doctrines hold that God creates ex nihilo, calling the new into being without dependence on pre-existing materials. Such is the New Testament teaching of creation by the Word of God.

Indian philosophy at times suggests that creation is a wholly fickle, meaningless act of God. This teaching stands in marked contrast to that of both the Old and New Testaments which proclaim that creation is a spiritual act

whereby God establishes the world, sustains it and remains sovereign over it. Creation has purpose and it expresses the unity and the integrity of God. The Old Testament teaches that the world is called into being by the will of God and that God remains close to his people, to guide and to judge. He is the Lord of history. The New Testament teaches that the creation is called into being by God's love and that the creature is the child of the Creator, fashioned in his image and inseparably related to him. God is sovereign to create, to sustain and to redeem.

CHAPTER III

CREATION AS A PURPOSEFUL ACT OF GOD

The question of purpose is as inescapable as the question of origins. We want to know whether the universe came into being only as a result of chance or as the product of a sequence of natural events; whether it is the expression of the whim of some distant deity, or whether creation is planned, a purposeful act of a God who knows and wills and acts in accordance with his will.

Revelation of Divine Purpose

Paul had no doubt that Christ in his own person revealed the eternal purpose of God's creative act.

To me...this grace was given, to preach
...the unsearchable riches of Christ,
and to make all men see what is the plan
of the mystery hidden for ages in God
who created all things, that through the
church the manifold wisdom of God might
now be made known to the principalities
and powers in the heavenly places. This
was according to the eternal purpose
which he has realized in Christ Jesus
our Lord....

(Eph. 3:8-11)

Creation and redemption are both encompassed by God's purpose, "the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things." The divine plan is not only revealed and accomplished amongst men through Christ, but it is also made known by his work to the "principalities and powers,"

to every force which the ancient world conceived as ruling in the realms between earth and highest heaven, which was the abode of the eternal God. Redemption is not something which God planned for a world already in existence; it is one with the plan of creation. "God, as the Creator of all things, includes in the one creative thought all the issues of finite things."¹

God's purpose in creation is to unite all things in himself that all may be one whole.

For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.
(Eph. 1:9 f.)

The bond of union is, for men, the bond of sonship with God.

This, too, is part of God's plan of creation.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world....He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will....
(Eph. 1:3-5)

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews also understood creation and redemption to be joined in the purpose of God. Christ, the Son, is the agent of creation as

¹ B. F. Westcott, Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, (London: Macmillan, 1906), quoted in Francis W. Beare, "The Epistle to the Ephesians, Introduction and Exegesis," The Interpreter's Bible, (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1953), X, p. 670.

he is the agent of salvation. The will which creates also redeems and redemption cannot be other than purposive. The purpose of God is made known not only through Christ but also through the fact that there has been continuity in God's self-revelation. God revealed his will in part through the prophets and in full through his Son.

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he created the world....When he had made purification for sins he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...

(Heb. 1:1-3)

Alexander Purdy, in his exegesis of the text of Hebrews, emphasizes the fact that the New Testament as a whole declares that the risen Christ is the revelation of the meaning of life and the purpose of creation.

Christianity as a separate religion began with belief in the Resurrection. "He lives" was the slogan of the first Christians. That meant many things, but always that Jesus was the key to the total meaning of life and to the destiny of the individual. He was Christ, Lord, Son of God, Son of man, and his human life had its significance only and always in relation to ultimate issues. Every N. T. writing shares with the author of Hebrews this general point of view.¹

God has a purpose in creation and this purpose is worked out in history and beyond.

¹ Alexander Purdy, "The Epistle to the Hebrews, Introduction and Exegesis," The Interpreter's Bible, op. cit., (1955), XI, p. 597.

The prophets saw the historical process as the working out of the purpose of God, but they were concerned with God's intent for the nations and for his chosen people, with his guidance and judgment over history rather than with his eternal and creating purpose. So in an oracle against Babylon, Isaiah says, "The Lord of hosts has sworn: 'As I have planned, so shall it be, and as I have purposed, so shall it stand'" (14:24) and again,

This is the purpose which is purposed concerning the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations. For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out and who will turn it back?

(14:26 f.)

Occam - Aquinas - Leibniz

In spite of the Bible testimony, Christian teaching has not always held to the purposive character of God's creative acts. There has been at times so great an emphasis on the almightiness of God that the divine omnipotence has been interpreted as sheer power, limitless and arbitrary. This is true of Occamist teaching: God is will and this will is absolute and unlimited except by itself. God brought this world into being by his might; the nature of the world was undetermined by anything except his will. The patterns which men call 'natural laws' were established by God and he is bound to them only by his own choice. God creates by force of will; his rule over his creation is absolute and arbitrary. Creation is to be understood only in terms of divine

power, not in terms of divine purpose.¹

A century before the time of Occam, Thomas Aquinas had pursued the question of man's origin and destiny which, along with the knowledge of God, he took to be the main subject of theological inquiry. He arrived at the conclusion that the creation of the world was an expression of God's love since God needs nothing himself. God expresses his love by bestowing it on the creatures whom he thereby calls into being. They exist by reason of the divine love. God's rule over his creation, however, is largely arbitrary. Man has a certain freedom of will and yet God may determine or permit any event. Predestination and determinism, expressions of the arbitrary will of God, have a significant place in the theology of Aquinas.²

Gottfried Leibniz, working during the latter half of the seventeenth century, also dealt with the problem of the nature and origin of the universe. His approach was philosophical. He believed that the universe comprised an infinite number of indivisible, discrete "monads," each one complete in itself and incapable of influencing or responding to influence by any other monad. All ideas are en-

1 Heinrich Boehmer, Luther and the Reformation in the Light of Modern Research, trans. E. S. G. Potter, (New York: Lincoln MacVeagh, 1930), p. 55.

2 Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952) p. 271.

veloped in the monads, but they must be drawn out into consciousness. In some monads consciousness is at a minimum; in others it attains a high degree of activity and so approaches the divine. God is the original monad in whose consciousness all is seen in perfect clarity and who is hence perfect in himself.¹

The created monads are derived from God by "continual outflashings of the divinity from moment to moment."² Perfection comes from God; imperfection arises from the limitations without which created things cannot exist. God's will is the will for the best, the will for perfection. He creates in order to reveal his perfection. He could have created any one of an infinite number of possible universes, but he chose to create that which would exhibit his perfection most adequately. Existence is determined not by the arbitrary will of God but by God's choice of the best. Not only is existence derived from God but possibilities themselves reside in him. God's will brings things to pass, but the divine will is coupled with divine knowledge which comprehends all possibilities.

Yet we must not think that the eternal truths being dependent upon God are therefore arbitrary and depend upon his will, as Descartes seems to have held, and after him Monsieur Poiret. This is the

1 Walker, op. cit., p. 485.

2 Gottfried W. von Leibniz, Discourses on Metaphysics, (trans. G. R. Montgomery, (Chicago: The Open Court Publ. Co., 1908), p. 261.

case only with contingent truths which depend upon fitness or the choice of the greatest good; necessary truths on the other hand depend solely upon his understanding and are the inner objects of it.

...
In God are present: Power, which is the source of everything; Knowledge, which contains the details of the ideas; and, finally, Will, which produces or effects changes in accordance with the principle of the greatest good.¹

...
Now as there are an infinity of possible universes in the Ideas of God, and but one of them can exist, there must be a sufficient reason for the choice of God which determines him to select one rather than another.

And this reason is to be found only in the fitness or in the degree of perfection which these worlds possess, each possible in proportion to the perfection which it involves.

This is the cause for the existence of the greatest good; namely, that the wisdom of God permits him to know it, his goodness causes him to choose it and his power enables him to produce it.²

Evil is not a positive reality; it is imperfection which arises from incomplete receptivity of the creature: "...created things derive their perfections through the influence of God, but their imperfections come from their own natures, which cannot exist without limits. It is in this latter that they are distinguished from God."³

Leibniz insisted that the world which we know, with its mixture of good and evil, the world which God

1 Leibniz, op. cit., p. 261.

2 Ibid., p. 262 f.

3 Ibid., p. 260.

created, is the best of all possible worlds: "this universe must be indeed better than every other possible universe."¹

Creation is not an arbitrary act of God's will; it is a planned and purposive act, determined by God's choice of the best.

If the will of God had not as its rule the principle of the best, it would tend towards evil, which would be worst of all; or else it would be indifferent somehow to good and to evil, and guided by chance.²

Contemporary Views

Emil Brunner regards the universe as the expression of God's purpose to communicate himself. The being of God and his will to self-communication are the source and the cause of all existence. God is the sole Original; he creates ex nihilo. There is no primordial substance nor even any formless 'nothing' as the stuff of creation. To bring order out of chaos or give shape to the shapeless is the function of a demiurge or the act of the gods of the creation myths. God is the true Creator who "calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom. 4:17). Creation arises from the will of God as purpose rather than as an arbitrary act. Brunner begins with New Testament teaching in his study of creation as in all of his studies

1 Gottfried W. Leibniz, Theodicy, trans. E. M. Huggard, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 378.

2 Ibid., p. 387.

and in so doing he draws a contrast between the narrative in Genesis which describes the fact and the manner of creation and New Testament writings which are concerned with the purpose of creation.¹

The purpose and the manner of creation are inseparably linked in New Testament teaching. Creation is by the divine Word, the Logos, the pre-existent Christ:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

(Jn. 1:1-3)

The creation through Christ is from God; it is also for God.

...for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

(I Cor. 8:6)

So also in the letter to the Colossians Paul says of Christ that "all things were created through him and for him" (Col. 1:16). The source itself reveals the purpose of creation. God creates by his Word and he creates for himself. The creature is not fashioned arbitrarily but is bound to his Creator by the Christ through whom creation was accomplished. "He is before all things, and in him

¹ Emil Brunner, Dogmatics, II, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, trans. Olive Wyon, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952), p. 7.

all things hold together" (Col. 1:17). God has shown his purpose further by remaining with that which he has created, seeking to draw all to himself through the Christ in whom he dwells. "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:19 f.).

Brunner insists that this must be the starting point for any understanding of creation, that the Word in Christ and the Word of creation are one and that the meaning of existence is made plain in this Word. We know God first as Lord, in Christ; only later do we know him as Creator. He can be known as Creator only because he is sovereign Lord. Thus origin and purpose are joined: God has made us - for himself.¹ Such a teaching differs radically from that of Whitehead. Whitehead's idea of a mutual interdependence of God and the world is inconceivable to Brunner. God is sovereign Lord; therefore he is Creator. The whole creation is dependent on him, but he is in no wise dependent on the creation. Brunner's own statement is quite unequivocal: "God is the One who absolutely determines all things, and is determined by none. He is conditioned by nothing, therefore, not even by a 'Nothing.'"²

1 Brunner, Creation and Redemption, op. cit., p. 8.

2 Ibid., p. 10.

He feels that this doctrine of creation readily includes the doctrine of evolution. The latter is regarded as a scientific description of the successive, causally related stages through which living forms have developed one from the other. Creation, however, is a primary act of God; it has no causal antecedents. Furthermore, in the evolutionary process there are points of discontinuity, the most important of which is the emergence of the human spirit. Such events Brunner classifies under the heading of 'supra causal'. They cannot be predicted or explained in terms of a causal series but appear as evidence of continuing creative acts. So Brunner pays tribute to Bergson's idea of Creative Evolution.¹

Creation is the work of God; it is the work of divine will and power and perfect freedom, but it is by no means an arbitrary act, for the freedom of God is the freedom of perfect love. God creates in love; therefore the act is purposive. "God creates the world because He wills to communicate Himself...As the Holy God He wills to glorify Himself in His Creation; as the loving God He wills to give Himself to others."²

Tillich, on the other hand, feels that the word 'purpose' cannot be used rightly in regard to creation. God creates because creativity is of the essence of

1 Brunner, Creation and Redemption, op. cit., pp. 39-41.

2 Ibid., p. 13.

divinity. He has no need beyond himself, no purpose in creating. The purpose of creation, from the standpoint of the creature, is that the creature shall realize his potentialities; for the creator, the purpose of creation is simply to create.¹ "Creation is not only God's freedom but also his destiny. But it is not a fate; it is neither a necessity nor an accident which determines him."²

Thus Tillich maintains that the doctrine of creation does not point to an event but rather serves to indicate man's creatureliness and God's essential creativity. "It is the basic description of the relation between God and the world."³ We cannot say that God has a purpose in creation; we can say only that God creates because it is his nature to create and that the creature is related to God by his participation in the "creative ground of being."⁴ God creates ex nihilo in the sense that there is no other ultimate out of which he creates. The creature therefore originates in "non-being," but his origin is also in "being-itself." The tragic element in life is contained in but is not identical with the

1 Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), I, p. 263 f.

2 Ibid., p. 252.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., p. 253.

element of non-being; it is "conquered by the presence of being-itself within the finite."¹ God is thus present in the creation as the ground of all being and this creative ground is victorious over the forces of non-being, but Tillich interprets this only as the nature of divinity, not as divine purpose.

Contrary to Tillich, Ferre stresses purpose as basic in creation, a fundamental characteristic of God himself. God is love; love is purpose, outgoing, free, continually creating.

It is because God both is and has purpose that He is neither a self-sufficient creator without love's expressing itself in eternal creativity nor the naturalistic fount of creativity who enjoys no self-sufficiency as a personal being.... His love as the function of His being creates new forms and is no mere dynamism within fixed forms. Neither pattern nor process, but love as creative (function-in-form) is ultimate. Love is a category including both the fixity and flexibility of personality, both being and having a creative purpose.²

Purpose is a basic element of identity in God. It is "the identity of love which remains selfsame uninterruptedly through all the infinite being-in-becoming of reality. God remains the same...in the sense of an invariant direction of will and of creative activity."³

1 Tillich, op. cit., p. 254.

2 Nels F. S. Ferre, The Christian Understanding of God, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1951), p. 50.

3 Ibid., p. 49.

God creates ex nihilo, turning non-being into being, bringing into existence the totally new. Something is created from nothing whenever there appears that which is "different from and in some sense more than the factors involved."¹ Divine purpose is manifest in the fact that God has established elements of constancy within the created universe. He has given freedom in increasing measure at each higher level of creation. The highest level is the personal and here freedom is given in greatest measure in order that God's purpose may be fulfilled through man's free response. A person is not merely the product of a sequence of causative events; a person is created, for he is something more than the physical and psychological factors involved in his existence.

A personal life...is more than matter and organic wholeness. Added to those is the immanence in each person of something of God's personal purpose. God operates in him on a new level. In this sense, human creation is unique and man is not merely an animal; he is that and also that "more" from God which is crucially distinctive of his life and reality.²

Levels of creation, increasing degrees of freedom and hence of precariousness in the created universe reveal the fact that God's creative act is purposive.

Karl Barth also speaks of the purpose of God in

1 Ferre, op. cit., p. 134.

2 Ibid., p. 137.

creation and like Ferre he identifies the divine purpose with love. Creation is a free act, not performed out of any need or lack in God but "finding its necessity only in His love."¹ God creates in wisdom and there can be no wisdom without purpose. Barth goes on to say then, with Calvin, that inasmuch as the world can exist only as God's creation and only in dependence on Him, the sole purpose and end of the world is to glorify God. Therefore the world is good.

From God's creating the world it follows that He created it for this purpose and with this destiny and therefore created it in accordance with this purpose and this destiny and therefore good.²

God's Purpose in Creation

Purpose can have no place in such a description of creation as is given by Whitehead in which it is said that the world creates God as God creates the world. Nevertheless, even in this philosophy it is understood that the universe is unified in God and it is he who draws it toward perfection. If God were conceived in personal terms this would imply divine purpose. Whereas Whitehead has displaced the thought of purpose with a stress on "process" and "passage into novelty," others such as Occam and to

1 Karl Barth, Credo, trans. J. S. McNab (London: Hodder & Stroughton, 1936), p. 31.

2 Barth, op. cit., p. 32.

some extent Tillich have either subordinated it or eliminated it on the ground that purpose implies that God has some need beyond himself and that this thought is incompatible with belief in the total self-sufficiency of God.

Predominantly, however, theologians ascribe some purpose to God's creative act; for most this purpose is defined in terms of the self-expression of divine love. Barth maintains that creation is a free act of God, out of his love, and that the purpose of the creation is that it shall glorify the Creator. Brunner describes creation as the self-communication of God; the divine Word is both its manner and its meaning. Creation is from God and for God, his self-giving and his self-glorification. Ferre defines God's purpose wholly in terms of love. God is love; love is purposive; love creates simply because it is the nature of love to create.

Paul identifies the purpose of God in creation with his purpose in redemption, finding this single meaning revealed in the person of Christ. The destiny of creation is that all shall be unified in God; the destiny of the creature is sonship with God. God creates in love, calling men to be his sons. This is his "eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 3:11). Surely it would be difficult to put any interpretation on the fact of Jesus Christ apart from God's purpose for creation.

The rationalists, in their endeavor to "explain" the acts of God, have discounted completely the factor of freedom which is a primary characteristic of personal spirit. Whitehead has replaced the Christian doctrine of a loving, creating personal God with an attempt to formulate a rational explanation of the universe. Tillich and Occam have presented a conception of God as a largely depersonalized Absolute. They have maintained that purpose cannot be attributed to God because purpose would imply some lack. This seems unjustifiable. Purpose may be forward moving, God's self-expression rather than a self-fulfilment which would mean completing what had been incomplete.

A rationalistic system can never comprehend the great religious realities. God has revealed himself as a personal spirit, a God of love, a God who acts with freedom, unbound by any limits which reason may define. Creation and redemption are free expressions of God's purpose and his love. These personal attributes transcend reason. They are not less real because they can be comprehended only by faith.

CHAPTER IV

CREATION AS AN ACT OF GOD'S LOVE

The love of God is to be understood ontologically, not as a sentiment or emotion. It is the going forth of God, his self-giving and hence his power. God is self-sufficient, needing nothing beyond himself for his own completion, but it is his nature to give himself freely and thus to create. If love is interpreted in this sense it is no longer necessary to inquire whether God, being love, is not dependent on some reality outside of himself on which to bestow his love. If love is defined as emotion it may be argued that divine love must be either the love which exists between the members of the Trinity or the love of God for created beings and hence that God is not self-sufficient and cannot exist alone.

Love is not self-contained, it is always outgoing, overflowing, unbound. This is what Aulen refers to as the "spontaneity" and the "explosive power" of love.¹ Agape is power rather than sentiment; it is not limited by that which is, but is able to bring into being the wholly new. It is necessary to understand love not only

¹ Gustaf Aulen, The Faith of the Christian Church, trans. H. H. Wahlstrom and G. E. Arden, (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1948), p. 130.

as noun, pointing to a reality, but as a verb, designating action. Thus a fundamental truth is expressed in the statement "God is love," but this truth makes a further impact as we say, "God loves." Love is not static; it goes forth. Love is not merely outgoing, however; it is self-giving, the out-going of the self. Therefore it is purposive, expressing the self who loves. The power of divine love is the power of the being of God directed toward the fulfilling of his purpose. God loves and by this self-giving he creates a universe which somehow expresses his purpose and creatures who are not self-sufficient beings but children so fashioned as to be responsive to the love which created them.

If the creation were divine emanations or bits of God, then God's love for it would be only a strange self-love. Such a pantheism differs greatly from the Christian understanding of creation and of love. God in his self-giving has created that which is apart from himself, new, distinct; he has fashioned creatures who are free and who may accept or reject his proffered love and who, accepting it, may enter into communion with their Creator. Neither free choice nor true communion would be possible if the creature were not a being who is "other than" the Creator.

The Christian Doctrine of Creation

Divine love in the Christian sense is very different from the eternal Ideas of Platonic thought. The Idea is static, changeless and unmoving. It is not an active force, reaching out into the world, giving of itself, exerting influence. Therefore the Idea has no power to create.¹ Divine love, agape, on the other hand, is a positive force, active, outreaching, not limited by fixed forms and hence free and creative. Agape differs from eros in this freedom to create, for eros includes a sense of lack and of need and reaches out for its own fulfillment whereas agape, being full, gives itself freely.²

Ferre believes that it is only through a recognition of this dynamic character of agape that we can come to any comprehension of the genuinely new. The God of Christian faith is not to be understood either in terms of being or of becoming but rather in terms of love which is "the form of being which acts out of complete concern not only for all, in all dimensions of life, and the conditions which sustain, promote and enhance life, but also for ever new life and new conditions of life."³ The emergence of the new is not part of a naturalistic process but the completely free act of an unlimited God. Ferre distin-

1 Nygren, op. cit., p. 170.

2 Ibid., p. 232.

3 Ferre, op. cit., p. 15 f.

guishes this interpretation sharply from the Aristotelian doctrine that a thing becomes in accordance with its own essence or entelechy and from all variations of the Platonic teaching that the Idea is primary and that God's act is not true creation but the fitting of the eternal patterns to the receptacle.

Love is not merely dynamic, it is outgoing; therefore it requires an "object of concern." This fundamental characteristic of agape bespeaks not a deficiency but the power of love to bring forth being out of non-being.

Love as ultimate being is self-same and its total direction is self-sustaining and sovereign. Yet love as ultimate being also is not in the sense that it requires an object of concern whether to create what is genuinely new or to arrange, foster and fulfill what is already given. Such need, however, is no deficiency but is rather the intrinsic expression of its own nature. The need to create or to forgive is not the weakness but the strength of love. Non-being, then, is the condition for, and the occasion of, love as being.... If love is the nature of ultimate being, nonbeing is the infinite possibility, correlative to the nature of being, yet not of it, for love to express its own sovereign nature.¹

The Nature of Agape

Agape is a sovereign force, bringing being out of non-being; its action is not determined by naturalistic laws but is free. Nevertheless this energy is not arbi-

1 Ferre, op. cit., p. 17.

trary; agape is intrinsically purposive. Love is directed by concern for the other; therefore it creates not perfection, for its own satisfaction but rather "the kind of condition where love has the opportunity to work."¹ The creature, created in love, is created free in order that he too may love. Yet because the creature is created in love and because this love is purposive, the creature, though free, is never separated from the love which created him. He whose love creates continues to sustain and redeem the creature by his love.

The very nature of the ultimate, the absolute, God as love, a self-existing and self-directing being, is to have relations. As a matter of fact, love freely creates relations. Such is its nature. Since, moreover, love does not manufacture puppets, because it is basically not causative but purposive, love not only has and creates relations, but also redeems these relations to whatever extent there is need of it. Love as the absolute by nature reclaims the mistakes and reconciles the over-againstness of finite freedom. ...the Absolute as love works for the spiritual, ethical and personal autonomy of His every created child.²

The outward motion of agape differs from that of eros. Eros reaches out to enjoy the other, to possess the other. Agape reaches out to give itself and herein lies its power to create. Such love gives itself without limitation but remains ever full. The being of God is

1 Ferre, op. cit., p. 16.

2 Ibid., p. 19.

not lessened by his self-giving, for his love is infinite. The new is brought into being without reducing or changing that which is. This is true creation, effected by the power of love. So Ferre writes again: "...love has an infinite possibility over which it disposes without being limited by it. Thus infinitely love works in its free, selective, creative manner. Infinitely love is inexhaustible without exhausting the realm of nonbeing."¹

Non-being is infinite possibility, not nothingness; therefore it is inexhaustible. This is the requisite condition for creative love. Love always has potentiality. It is self-existing and self-sustaining and yet self-giving. This self-giving produces new realities, not mere "moreness."² Furthermore the new is brought into being in accordance with the purpose of the Creator. God creates with perfect freedom, but his love is nonetheless self-consistent and purposive. Creation is never a random, undirected act. It is "neither arbitrary as without all context nor yet closed as within a fixed system of relationships."³ It is the self-expression of God and consistent with his being as love. Creation is not a necessary act of God; it is the inevitable expression of his love and hence of his purpose.

1 Ferre, op. cit., p. 27.

2 Ibid., p. 22.

3 Ibid., p. 130.

Divine love is the sovereign power of God. It is sovereign over the creation which it has brought into being ex nihilo. Aulen stresses the fact that this understanding of creation is a religious concept and not a rational explanation of the universe.¹ It emphasizes the complete dependence of the creation on God. Love, being sovereign, acts not only to create but to sustain, to judge and to redeem and so to fulfill God's purpose.

The living God realizes his love and will in continuous activity. Christian faith beholds the divine activity from three points of view: as an act of salvation, an act of judgment, and an act of creation.²

Just as the content of the Christian conception of God is focused in divine love, so to the eye of faith all of God's activity is concentrated upon the realization of his purpose. Faith knows of no divine activity which can be separated from God's love, and which is not in some way or other an expression of his will. Every act of God signifies in the final analysis a realization of his love...³

Seen in this way, God's power and his love are identical. God creates with the freedom of absolute power, but the act is not arbitrary inasmuch as it is an act of love. The creation remains bound to God not because it is necessary to him but precisely because the love which creates also draws the world toward the Creator. Brunner

1 Aulen, op. cit., p. 163.

2 Ibid., p. 160.

3 Ibid., p. 162.

designates the will of God as the power of creation and hence the ground of all existence. The world does not exist out of any necessity but only because God has called it into being. He has done so because he wills to communicate himself and his self-communication is the impartation of his love. Therefore it is the love of God which is the source of creation.¹ Creation, in Brunner's understanding as in Ferre's, is primarily the bringing forth of children fashioned in love, bearing the stamp of their Creator and capable of responding to him in love. God creates fellowship by calling into being creatures who are both free and responsible, endowed with a share of his love and hence of his power. Therefore the creature also has a certain capacity to create, by virtue of the power of the love which has been given to him. This capacity is limited because in man love is limited; with God the power to create knows no bounds because God's love is infinite. The creature has freedom to create to the extent that he receives the love of God and responds to it in love. "The nature of God and of His whole family is to abound eternally with creative joy and zest. The more of God is in creation, the more this abounding is true of its nature."² As God shares his love he shares the power of that love. God creates children, able to know and to participate in his

1 Brunner, Creation and Redemption, op.cit., p.13.

2 Ferre, op. cit., p. 218.

purpose, but the children are nonetheless creatures, bearing the stamp of their Creator but not possessed of his fullness.

Being is love, and no personal being becomes apart from the actual impartation of love. God is ever part of His personal creation. In creation of children God makes bodies, but gives His spirit....God shares His exhaustless energy, not causatively, whether by creating the impersonal out of nothing or by depersonalizing realms out of His own being, but, rather, particularly by the sharing of His personal self in the generation of persons.... When He breathes His spirit into man He breathes it into him as man's spirit, not as His own full spirit.¹

Love is intrinsically creative. It continually expresses itself in new forms, bringing the new into being and recreating the old. This does not mean that creation is continuous or that to sustain the universe God must create it anew in each moment. It means only that love pours itself forth eternally but without compulsion. There are elements of preservation within the created universe by which God sustains it, but the wholly new is derived only from his love. Each individual human being must be seen both in terms of the continuity of his antecedents and in terms of the discontinuity of his coming into the world as a separately conceived and wholly new creation of God. The Christian doctrine of creation is a statement of this relationship of the creature to the

1 Ferre, op. cit., pp. 28, 29, 39.

Creator rather than a theory as to whether the universe came into being by a single act of creation or by continuous generation and evolution.¹

God's purpose in creation is not fulfilled in a single act but through the continuing outpouring of his love which recreates and redeems, restoring the fellowship which he purposed to establish and drawing men toward him in love. His purpose is accomplished not by force but by the sovereignty of his infinitely creative love. If love is always outgoing, always creative, then creation has no beginning in time. This is the position which Ferre takes when he writes, "God has no time of isolation before creation; being now enjoys no status of priority over becoming. Though creation...is a free act and not a forced state, it is nonetheless as intrinsic to God's nature as His very being."² Creativity is part of the self-being of God.

Creation Through The Son

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews names the Son as the agent of creation and the sustainer of the universe.

...in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp

¹ Brunner, Creation and Redemption, op. cit., pp. 33 ff.

² Ferre, op. cit., p. 52.

of his nature, upholding the universe
by his word of power.

(Heb. 1:2 f.)

Actually this is again an affirmation that creation is an act of love for it is the Son who reveals and expresses to us the outgoing love of God. Alexander Purdy, writing for the Interpreter's Bible, links this concept of the Son as the agent of creation with the Hebrew idea of Wisdom as the outreaching power of God and the Greek thought of the Logos as God's self-expression. The Son is "the outgoing of God into the world, which he sustains by his word of power." This is in no sense a denial that it is God himself who creates. "The accent is upon God's action and revelation in and through the Son, whose identity in nature with God simply ensures that the revelation is truly from and of God." The Son is the revealer of the love of God in creation as in redemption, which are one in essence and in purpose.¹

John, writing in the framework of Greek thought, attributed creation to the Logos, the outgoing of God's Word: "In the beginning was the Word...all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made" (Jn. 1:1-3). The Word, however, is identified fully with God himself: "...the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (Jn. 1:1). John then immediately makes the transition into Christian terms: "And the Word became

1 Purdy, op.cit., pp. 600 ff.

flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (Jn. 1:14). The Word is the Son and throughout the remainder of the gospel John consistently uses the Christian designation. John's teaching concerning creation thus coincides with that of Paul. Paul spoke of creation through Christ and for Christ (Col. 1:16) thus attributing to the Son both the power of creation and the revelation of its meaning. Christ is also the unifying power of the universe - "in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:17) - which again is the power of love itself. It follows naturally then that Paul should say, "in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Col. 1:19). It is the love of God which creates and sustains and redeems and this love is made manifest to men through Christ.

Creation and Providence

Divine providence is an aspect of God's creativity. God does not create once and for all but remains related to the universe as its continuing Creator. This is the relationship which Tillich describes as God's "sustaining" and "directing" creativity. Sustaining creativity refers to the maintaining of the calculable and continuing elements within reality. It differs from "originating" creativity by which the new is brought into being. Stability and structure are essential to being itself and these, as well as continuing change, are due to God's

continuing act of creativity.¹ "Directing" creativity refers to the manner of divine guidance of the universe. God works through the freedom which he has given to his creatures, not by determining each event. It is this continuing, guiding, creative concern of God which we know as providence. It is the sovereignty of the Creator working through the freedom of the creature.

Providence is a permanent activity of God. He never is a spectator; he always directs everything toward its fulfilment. Yet God's directing creativity always creates through the freedom of man and through the spontaneity and structural wholeness of all creatures....Providence is not interference; it is creation....The man who believes in providence does not believe that a special divine activity will alter the conditions of finitude and estrangement. He believes and asserts with the courage of faith, that no situation whatsoever can frustrate the fulfilment of his ultimate destiny.²

This, according to Tillich, is the key to the power of prayer. Men pray with faith in God's directing creativity which transforms existing situations and guides all things toward their ultimate fulfilment. Prayer is an element in this creative work of God. Revelation and salvation are also factors in the creative guidance by which God accomplishes all that he has purposed. God has created a free world and free creatures. He guides them through freedom, not in contradiction to it. Only love

1 Tillich, op. cit., p. 262.

2 Ibid., p. 266 f.

can so create without destroying freedom. God is not responsible for all that happens, but he can creatively redirect the outcome of all events. He neither causes evil and tragedy nor intervenes by sheer power to prevent them, but his love is sovereign over them. Brunner cites this as a basic Biblical teaching.

Human responsibility and freedom are placed alongside of divine sovereignty over all that happens; the unconditional, clear, sole, responsibility of man for evil, and the divine power and wisdom which turns this evil into one of the threads used in the divine web....¹

This does not deny the divine sovereignty over nature and events, the power to perform miracles. A miracle is an event which is unexplained, which seems to have occurred in defiance of known laws of causality. The so-called "laws" of nature and of causality, however, are descriptive of the known orderliness of the universe but are not a constraint upon God. So Brunner writes again: "The personal idea of God...implies the divine freedom over all causality, over all necessity."² Love is free. It may work within known patterns or beyond them to create and to fulfill. God is a living God; he is and remains Lord of his creation. The appearance of the wholly new and the transformation of the old attest the freedom of his love and his power to create.

1 Brunner, Creation and Redemption, op.cit., p.175.

2 Ibid., p. 156.

Freedom and Love

The world was so created that nature is relatively predictable, though at all levels it is endowed with some measure of freedom, giving a certain precariousness as well as a basic dependability to man's life in nature. Man himself is free albeit responsible to his Creator. This element of freedom in nature and in man leaves the way open for evil and sin and suffering. Without it, however, man could not respond to God's love for love is the act of a free spirit and cannot be compelled. God has created the conditions in which love may abound. Paradoxically, the presence of evil reveals the love of God. If God, in his omnipotence, had created a world from which sin and suffering were excluded this would be also a world devoid of love. Sin is sin only because it is a rejection of God's proffered love; it is a wrong choice, a failure in man's response to God. There can be no choice unless man is free to choose; there can be no wrong except as right and wrong are measured by the purposes of God. "Sin is not a permanent situation in the nature of things. Sin is man's direct denial, as direct as is possible to a creature, of God's fellowship for him."¹

God permits men to rebel against him in order that when we turn to him we shall turn freely and in love.

¹ Nels F. S. Ferre, Evil and the Christian Faith, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1947), p. 48.

Ferre believes that this rebellion is essential if man is to establish his self-hood and respond to his Creator in the fellowship which God purposed. The possibility of sin is present because of "the need for a real rather than a theoretical freedom, that we might become real individuals, free, understanding, willing sons of our Father. God does not cause sin but He made it possible and foresaw it."¹

Evil is an evil because it contradicts a higher good which might have been. Seen in this larger view, it sets off in contrast the possibility of the better and hence may serve a certain pedagogic function. Man's use of freedom involves continuing experimentation, trial and error, learning from experience and sudden new insights often coming out of pain and suffering. God's love is sovereign over this process, not causing evil but using it.

Being can be infinite only when understood as love, for then even what is inconsistent with the eternal structure as such, can be understood as consistent with its creative nature or with its pedagogical purpose in time; for love allows the freedom which produces the inconsistencies within its pedagogical period.²

Awareness of sin stands beside the revelation of the holiness of God's love. Sin is separation, the rejection of love; repentance, return, makes possible a renewal

1 Ferre, Evil and the Christian Faith, op. cit., p. 53.

2 Ferre, Christian Understanding of God, op.cit., p. 22.

of the fellowship of love. The Old Testament faces sin by contrasting it to the righteousness of the law. Evil is punishment. God takes an overt part in history. The New Testament gospel, on the other hand, defines sin as a denial of love, an offense against God himself rather than a breaking of the commandments of God. God creates children for loving fellowship with himself and with one another and our failure or inadequacy in love is sin in that it works counter to the purposes of God. "You shall love the Lord your God...and your neighbor as yourself" (Mk. 12:30 f). The Old Testament states the initial commandment (Deut.6:5) and binds it within a legalistic system. Jesus reiterates and underscores it but sets it free to be the creative ground of all relationships. The law can only restrict; love is free to create. The law is a starting point, but love is the fulfilment of the law. Christ reveals the full creative freedom of agape.

God does not primarily want servants of the law, but free sons, eager for right relations. The law in this respect is only a tutor unto Christ. Only by our getting beyond the whole perspective of the law, clean and clear away from this juridical point of view or attitude, into the understanding and acceptance of the divine Agape where there is no question of law or of trespasses, but of love and of joy, of peace and of creative personal relations through the power of God, can we ever be set fully free.¹

1 Ferre, Evil and the Christian Faith, op. cit., p. 45.

The Fulfilment of Creation

This is the meaning of salvation, this being set free from sin, free from "the law," free to live in perfect love. Christ has revealed to us something of the fulness of God's love and has shown us what this can mean in the transformation of human lives. He has made the power of that love available to us for our salvation, which is to say that it sets us free to live in love according to the purposes of God. Redemption is thus the fulfilment of creation. It can be accomplished only by the same power which creates, namely the power of agape. "God's work in atonement is the making available of the love that is the power to salvation, whereby the past is remade, the present redirected..."¹ This renewal and re-formation is not a patching up of the old but a new creation wrought by God.

To create means more than just to fashion something or to cause it to come into being. It means to purpose, to give life with a plan for that life. Redemption is a carrying out of the purpose of creation. If God has purposed to bring into being sons, free creatures who will respond to him in love, redemption will be an essential part of creation. Man must first discover his freedom before he can freely return God's love. The realization of temptation is the recognition of the freedom to choose.

¹ Ferre, Christian Understanding of God,
op. cit., p. 209.

Even Jesus Christ, in that he was fully man as well as fully God, experienced the power of temptation and hence the extent of man's freedom and the open possibility of sin. Redemption is wrought by the Creator working through man's freedom, not in contradiction to it, to complete his creation. Only love could so free men from bondage to sin without destroying the freedom which makes love possible even as it leaves open the possibility of sin. Creation is not once and for all; it is a continuing act. God brings into being free souls, created in love and held forever in that love. It is only by the power of that love that they are recreated and redeemed. God's agape reaches out to touch that which is least worthy, most debased, and transforms it, giving it beauty and strength and value. This creative power is one of the traits by which Luther distinguished divine love from human love; Nygren makes the distinction basic in his treatise on agape and eros.¹ Christ revealed the meaning of such love as he touched one after another the outcast, the disturbed, the profligate, and gave them new life.

God creates men to be his sons and this act of creation continues as he draws them into sonship through the creative power of his love. Rebirth is an act of creation by the creator God for whom alone this is possible.

1 Nygren, op. cit., p. 725.

This is the work of God in Christ which Paul set forth in his epistle to the Ephesians:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us.

(Eph. 1:3-8)

And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world,...but God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God - not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

(Eph. 2:1, 2a, 4-10)

CHAPTER V

CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

The creation stories in the book of Genesis both recognize man as a special creation of God. The priestly account in the opening chapter builds up to this event, step by step. God caused the dividing of the day from the darkness, the separation of the land and the seas; he bade the earth to put forth vegetation and called into being the fish of the sea and the birds of the air.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;..." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him...
(Gen. 1:26 f.)

The earlier account, with its anthropomorphic God who walks in the garden in the cool of the day, tells how Jahve reached his hand into the earth and "formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7). God formed the other creatures also out of the earth, but into man he breathed his own spirit to dwell in the man and to give him life.

The truth behind these early narratives is repeated in the words of Paul:

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you?...God's temple is holy and

that temple you are.

(I Cor. 3:16 f.)

God in Man

God has created man in his own image and has breathed the divine spirit into him, calling him son. It is the outpouring of God's love by which man is created and this same love, dwelling in man, retains its power of creativity to the extent that man permits it to work in him and through him. Man participates in the divine creative activity when love is operative in his life. The more fully men orient their lives to God's calling, responding to his love, the more fully that love bears fruit in them, creating the new and renewing the old. Born to be children of God, men share in the divine capacity to create.

Agape is purposive, giving direction to God's creative acts. This directing power is sovereign also over man's creative thrust. God loves, and as this love is received consciously, the creature himself is enabled to love and, in loving, to create. In this fashion the son enters into the purposes of the Father. This leaves man with a constant restlessness to reach out and further out, for the possibility of new creation will exceed any tentative perfection. A life which is aligned with God never can be either static or isolated. It will give of itself constantly and in giving of itself it will create fellowship which is the product of love. Whatever may be

attained, God's challenge to create will beckon further for creativity is of the essence of love. Ferre finds in this fact the reason for the paradox of peace and restlessness in Christian experience.

The smoothest peace finds the creative challenge of God's love goes beyond it. Thus God makes us more real and spoils every premature or uncreative peace; but beyond all such efforts He also offers His peace and abiding fellowship.¹

God carries out a part of his creative work through his creative children. Men are enabled to help one another as they permit God's love to be operative within them. The greatest servants of mankind, the greatest saints, have been those who have known that their only power for good was the power of the living God. Ferre points out emphatically that this creative force, working in man, is not a strange magic which makes possible the working of miracles or the doing of good in the purely human sense; it is rather "an openness to God's good for each and all and to new, creative power for history."² This is the realm of creation, of special providence. It is a realm of freedom in which love is operative and is hence not subject to precise analysis on the basis of known factors. God accords to his creation that freedom which is the essential condition for

1 Ferre, Christian Understanding of God, op. cit., p. 204.

2 Ibid., p. 151 f.

love. Creative love, expressing itself within this environment, brings the new into being in history. This is the "fruit of God's Spirit" in the life of man.

But when, through faith, a man is laid open to the action of God, God's Agape is shed abroad in his heart through the Holy Spirit (Rom. v. 5), and the foundation is thereby laid for the new, Spirit-given Agape-life, of which the subject is no longer the man himself, but God, Christ, God's Agape, God's Spirit. Constrained by the Agape of Christ (2 Cor. v. 14), or led by the Spirit (Gal. v. 18), the Christian now carries out God's work, bears the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit, however, is first and foremost love (Gal. v. 22). Thus Agape, the Agape of God and of Christ, has both the first and the last word in Paul. Divine love dominates everything from beginning to end, freely giving and sacrificing itself for man, seeking him out, being shed abroad in his heart, bearing the fruit of the Spirit in his life.¹

God's agape, which is the power of creation, continues to express itself actively and creatively through God's children. Its continuation in history is the type of love for the neighbor which Jesus taught - a love which gives itself freely, seeking nothing in return. Such love has the power to create the new in men and in relationships between men. Man has received freely of God's agape; as he has received so he is enabled to give. The love with which he reaches out to his neighbor is not his own, but God's who gave it. It is not of a human eros but of divine

1 Nygren, op. cit., p.132 f.

agape, working in man, that Paul could say:

Love never ends; as for prophecy, it will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.

(I Cor. 13:8-10)

Knowledge and prophecy are not living power. Their speech enlightens, but it brings nothing into being. They will pass away when we "understand fully" (v.12). Only love abides eternally, living and giving life. Its source is always in God. Its nature is to abound, and he who consciously receives will in turn impart it to another. Man, created in God's image, is created to be the vehicle for this living power. This is the message of John's gospel. Love is sovereign. It is the power of the Father imparted fully to the Son.

He who comes from above is above all;...He bears witness to what he has seen and heard....For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for it is not by measure that he gives the Spirit; the Father loves the Son, and has given all things into his hand.

(Jn. 3:31-35)

The gift is offered in turn to man and as he receives it, believing, he enters into that which is alone eternal and abiding.

I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall ye live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

(Jn. 11:25 f.)

Christ is the revelation of the love of God for his children, the bearer of the invitation to enter into the kingdom of love.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

(Jn. 3:16)

Those who acknowledge the divine gift are heirs to its power and born anew.

The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not....But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

(Jn. 1:9-13)

God's love is made flesh in the person of Christ:

No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

(Jn. 1:18)

Love goes forth from Christ to those amongst whom he dwells. Its power is seen in the works which it accomplishes in those who believe. So Jesus asked his disciples to see the hand of God in the works if they could not believe in him without them.

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves.

(Jn. 14:10 f.)

This is the power of the universe; this is the heart of God. He who accepts, who believes, will bear the fruit of this power. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6). God's love will go forth from them even as it has been received by them.

If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.' Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive...

(Jn. 7:37-39)

Love will be known through its deeds.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do because I go to the Father.

(Jn. 14:12)

The love of God is the love of the Father for the Son, the love of the Son for the children of God, the love of the children of God for their neighbor.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love....This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you....You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide...

(Jn. 15:9,12,16)

The commandment is that men shall love one another with the same love with which God loves them, with agape which "does not insist on its own way" (I Cor. 13:5) but which is free. outgoing and creative.

Such love for the neighbor will be concerned solely with the neighbor. Its origin is not in the desire to win favor with God nor in the worth of the neighbor but in God himself. Love is the fruit of love.

It is not as the 'prime, Unmoved Mover' that God sets love in motion. Being Himself Agape, He brings forth Agape. It is not as being loved, but as loving, that God sets love in motion. Here, therefore, the phrase 'for God's sake' has no teleological but only a causal significance. Since God is Agape, everyone who is loved by Him and has been gripped and mastered by His love cannot but pass on this love to his neighbour. In this way God's love passes over directly into the Christian's love for his neighbour.¹

The Christian Ethic of Love

Christian love, like the divine love which is its source, is spontaneous and unmotivated, giving itself freely. Its action cannot be explained rationally any more than the outcome of its action can be predicted in terms of known factors. It is an active force which can bring something new into any combination of circumstances, changing their meanings even where the outward facts remain unaltered. The blind man, confronted by love, may or may not gain physical vision, but if he receives new sight spiritually, the significance of his physical blindness will be changed.

Such love goes forth out of its own fulness to give, rather than to seek something for itself. It responds

1 Nygren, op. cit., p. 216.

to need rather than to worth in the object of its concern. God's love reaches out to the saint, but also to the sinner to restore him into the divine fellowship. Christians are bidden not only to "love one another," but to love one another "even as I have loved you" (Jn. 13:34), asking no questions as to worthiness. "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Why? "...so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:44 f.), - so that fellowship may be restored, so that the enemy may not suffer enmity, so that men may be bearers of the love of God to one another. This is the meaning of sonship in the creature who was made in the image of God and called to be God's son through the gift of agape. The love of God not only reaches out to the sinner, it acts on him. So also Christian love is more than goodwill; it is creative concern. It acts. "God's love for sinners and Christian love for enemies are correlatives."¹

Herein lies one of the great distinctions which Nygren draws between eros and agape. "Eros recognizes value in its object - and loves it. Agape loves - and creates value in its object."² This divine, creative love is the same love which can act through the sons of God. It is the love of which Paul wrote, "if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing"

1 Nygren, op. cit., p. 102.

2 Ibid., p. 210.

(I Cor. 13:2). It can transform the lives of men and acting through men it can alter other lives and change the course of history. Christian love is the love of God "which has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us "(Rom. 5:5).

Such love has the power to create a new fellowship between men, even when fellowship seemed impossible. Creation of community is an essential outcome of the outpouring of agape. Ferre believes, therefore, that the establishment of the church is necessary to the full revelation of God in Christ. The revelation in Jesus is not complete.

He reveals love in Jesus as far as an individual can reveal it. But love is most fully revealed in a fellowship. Only the Church can reveal the Trinity, for the Trinity is fellowship. Christ in Jesus stands for the unity of the Godhead, the singleness of it; but Christ in the Christian community stands for the richness of the eternal fellowship in God....Jesus is not the whole Christ....The fellowship came through him. Through him came irreversibly the true Christ who is God's Agape, but the full Christ came only with the revelation of the Church.¹

The Christian ethic rests on the Christian understanding of the doctrine that man is created as a child of God, fashioned in his image, conceived in love and called to be the bearer of this same creative love. This is the

¹ Ferre, Christian Understanding of God, op. cit., p. 174.

ethic which does not destroy the law but fulfills it. It never does less than the law, but always exceeds it, creating, because it gives freely beyond what is required.

Love does not abolish justice; it is more than justice.

"For I tell you unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). So Jesus presents the ethic of agape:

You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill;...' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment...

(Matt. 5:21 f.)

...
You have heard that it was said, 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil.

(Matt. 5:38 f.)

...turn to him the other also ... (v. 39)

...let him have your cloak as well... (v. 40)

...go with him two miles... (v. 41)

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you... (v. 44)

Such an ethic is absurd in terms of rational calculation.

Its meaning lies in the fact that man is called to share in the divine activity whereby God accomplishes his purpose of creating fellowship.

The love which is the basis of the Christian ethic is spontaneous and free, but it is not undirected. It is responsible love. Its precise action cannot be predicted, but to the extent that it is true agape it will

act in keeping with the purposes of God. Its unique quality is the capacity to create, which the law can never do. Here again Nygren draws an important distinction.

The limitation of the law is just this, that it can never evoke a really free, willing and spontaneous action. The law meets us with its commands, as an imperative, and that is the very reason why it can never produce anything really good. It is in essence unproductive...¹

Aulen also points out that as man accepts the Christian ethic of "a service in love on behalf of the neighbor... new possibilities are opened for works which do not lie within the framework of the law."² This is the teaching of Paul, that the son enters into the creative freedom of the Father.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...

(Rom. 8:14-17)

Thus the Christian ethic is seen to be the expression of a theocentric faith. Nygren cites this interpretation of religion and ethics as an essential characteristic of Christianity, "Christianity knows nothing either

1 Nygren, op. cit., p. 727.

2 Aulen, op. cit., p. 418.

of a non-ethical fellowship with God or of non-religious ethics. The Christian Religion is a thoroughly ethical religion and its ethic is a thoroughly religious ethic."¹ This, Nygren believes, is because of the way Christianity both frames and answers the essential questions of ethics and religion. The religious question centers on God rather than on man and the ethical question is concerned with the Good rather than with happiness. Both questions are answered by the same truth: love is the heart of the universe. God is agape and the Good is agape.²

Agape is the power of creation; it gives life; it establishes fellowship between God and man; it creates community amongst men. Love is central in the Christian faith and in the ethic which grows from it. Christian love for the neighbor is rooted in the love of God. God's love is given freely and those who receive it freely are called to give with like freedom. "You received without pay, give without pay" (Matt. 10:8). This is the Christian meaning of the commandment of love. "The Agape that is required here has its prototype in the Agape manifested by God, and therefore it must be spontaneous and unmotivated, uncalculating, unlimited and unconditional."³ The law is static, unproductive. The love ethic of

1 Nygren, op. cit., p. 46.

2 Ibid., p. 47 f.

3 Ibid., p. 91

Christianity exceeds the righteousness of the law, finding new ways, creating fresh alternatives, freely seeking the good. The moving power of this ethic is not value-seeking eros but the value-creating love of God.

Freedom to Create

Freedom is requisite if love is to be creative. God has created the conditions in which man is free in relation to his neighbor and therefore man's love towards the neighbor can be spontaneous and creative. Nygren feels that man's love for God is necessarily different from God's love for man and man's love for his neighbor. Man is not free in relation to God in the same sense that he is free in relation to his neighbor. He is related to God as the creature to his Creator, free and yet dependent. His love toward God is for him to give; nevertheless it is not unprompted but rather a response to God's love toward him. Man's love for God can be creative only when it is expressed as love toward the neighbor. Nygren indicates that for this reason Paul avoids using the term *agape* for man's love for God.¹

Man's freedom includes not only freedom of choice but the freedom to devise new ends and the means to accomplish those ends. Ends are always the product of a will. Inspired by divine love, man may posit new ends in harmony

1 Nygren, op. cit., p. 213.

with the will of God and be empowered to devise the means for working toward those ends. This is part of man's God-given responsibility and freedom to create. Creation is an act of free spirit and man can act creatively only when he is set free. As he enters into the freedom of a life in fellowship with God, he too becomes, to some extent, creator.

God is here creating creators and children. God's life is rich through creativity. In such adventures are zest and joy. When we partake of His purpose, according to our endowment in creation and how we use it, we share this creative experience. Even we are given the strange gift of creating out of nothing. We become creative beings. We are endowed with the capacity to create new beauty with, as well as after, God, both in art and in life.¹

At the highest, man may even "enter into the responsibility of redemptive love."² Man is never free of sin, however, and he lives and labors in a sinful world. His work of love must always be carried on within these limitations.

...we have to act in love in a concrete world; therefore we cannot construct an abstract idea of love to meet this situation....To act in the world means to work with sinful material - since we ourselves are sinners. In spite of this we are to act, not by making compromises... but by making use of existing conditions as though they were holy, since they have been hallowed by the Divine forgiveness.³

1 Ferre, Christian Understanding of God, op.cit., p. 138.

2 Ibid.

3 Brunner, Divine Imperative, op. cit., p. 246.

Man aligns himself with the purposes of God through prayer and by so living that God can work through him in answer to his prayer. It is through prayer that man enters into communion and fellowship with God which is the basis of any truly creative fellowship amongst men. Prayer has tremendous creative power as it opens the channels for the effective outpouring of God's creative love in the lives of men. God can so use men only when they are in line with his purposes; when they do accept this proffered fellowship they become vehicles of the power of the Creator.

We can also become blessings in every realm of life, the more we let ourselves be blessed. God wants to help the world, spirit, mind and body; but He cannot use us except we be in line with His purpose which is also the true welfare of the world. As we accept that purpose for fellowship, and live by His grace, at ever higher levels we become open for the Holy Spirit to use us, and to work in nature and history, as well, in support of that use.¹

God has revealed his love in Christ. He reveals himself constantly anew in all who will receive him and will live by the power of the love with which he endows those who accept his call to sonship. Man is created in the image of God and as God works through him he shares in the divine power to create.

¹ Ferre, Christian Understanding of God, op. cit., p. 152.

CHAPTER VI

CREATION AND REDEMPTION

Any doctrine of creation must take into account the fact of evil and sin. The world as we know it offers a seeming contradiction to the teaching that the earth and its inhabitants are the creation of a sovereign, loving God whose will is for the good. The problem cannot be answered either by the affirmation that all that happens is the will of God or by a type of dualism which denies his sovereignty. We cannot say that all that is is for the good since all is from God, but neither are we forced into suggesting that, the world being patently fraught with evil, its origin cannot possibly be divine. It is necessary to look beyond the outward facts for the evidence of God's purpose.

The Need for Redemption

God has created man for fellowship and love; therefore he has created an environment in which love is possible. He has accorded freedom in some degree to all creation but most particularly to man. It is possible for man to love only because he is free. Freedom not only provides the requisite condition for love, but quite inescapably it leaves open also the ever-present possibility of sin. If man is free to receive God's love and to live

by its power and its guidance, he is free also to reject that love and to rebel against the demands which it makes on him. Sin is this assertion of self-will in opposition to the will of God. It must be noted, however, that sinlessness does not mean suppression of the self but rather the fullest development and expression of the individual as he responds to God's creative guidance.

Sin is a turning away from God; therefore it creates a breach in the fellowship between the creature and his Creator. Fellowship is a two-sided relationship and cannot be restored by man alone. This is man's need for redemption. He is created free; he sins; he cannot be restored except by the divine love which recreates the broken fellowship. Man is created as an "other," related to God, as father and son are related and yet distinct. Man is neither a part of God nor an alien standing in opposition to the Creator and incapable of communicating with him. He is a child of God, born to respond. God's will for man and for the world is to be carried out through the creature's free response. The power by which God accomplishes his will is the power of love. Love does not act arbitrarily; it leads, it draws, it converts. This is the nature and the meaning of redemption. It is a creative act, fashioning anew the fellowship which God purposes.

The Creative Act of Redemption

The purpose of creation rests with God. God's self-revelation to us suggests that this purpose is for an ever-growing creative fellowship amongst men and between man and his Creator. Jesus has shown clearly what this type of relationship can mean on earth; he has suggested what it may signify in realms beyond our immediate experiencing. The prodigal, returning home in penitence, finds that the love of the father not only saves him from the personal destruction with which he was faced but restores him to a place in the family circle and gives him a new opportunity to fulfill the function he was intended to carry out as his father's son. Jesus offered to Zacchaeus a fellowship so creative in nature that it accomplished the restoration of severed relationships between Zacchaeus and his fellows and his God. Jesus indicated that the relationship which was restored was the relationship which God purposes for us each as his sons. "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham" (Lk. 19:9). Furthermore, though man's turning to God is a free act, it is not original with him but a response to the love of God which seeks him out. "For the Son of man came to seek and save the lost" (Lk. 19:10). We have no record of Jesus making any direct suggestion to Zacchaeus, yet the relationship which he established was so creative that the tax collector was enabled to see and to undertake the next step. Redemption was accomplished through the

double agency of God's initiative and man's response. The divine love, brought by Jesus to Zacchaeus and received and responded to by him, evidenced itself as a creative force. It could act creatively only through this free response. The love which Jesus brought to Nazareth worked little change amongst the people because they did not receive it as the divine, creative force which brings renewal. Redemption is two-sided; it involves both initiative and response. Man's slowness to respond delays the working out of God's purpose. So it is recorded of the visit to Nazareth: "And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them" (Mk. 6:5).

God has revealed in Christ his personal concern for every man. His purpose in creation includes his purpose for each individual.

In faith in the God revealed in Christ
I know that God not only 'calls me by
my name,' but that also, quite personally,
He has included me in His plan for the world....Even for God I
myself am never a means to an impersonal
and unknown end, but because I am thus
in relation to God I remain, for God, an
end in myself.¹

This is true, inevitably, if God's purpose is one of fellowship. Fellowship is a personal relationship between free individuals; therefore the individual is indispensable

¹ Brunner, Creation and Redemption, op. cit., p. 156 f.

to the fulfilment of the purpose. This personal relationship becomes increasingly creative as it becomes increasingly intimate. As man responds to the divine love, entering into closer relationship with God and with his fellows, God's love is able to work increasingly creatively through him to the furthering of the divine purpose. This closeness is what Paul spoke of as the conformity of man's mind to the will of God: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Rom. 12:2).

The full meaning of this process can be only suggested in historical time. "History is the beginning of a long, long process, the end of which is the sharing of a creative zest and joy, in fellowship, beyond anything which we can possibly begin to imagine."¹ We are born "Because Love must bring forth children - to live in Love's devotion."² Therefore also God offers the means of salvation when we fail "to live in love's devotion." The outgoing, self-giving agape which brings forth children continues to reach out to succor its sons. Man is born to respond to the love in which he is created and through this response to share in the power to create. God is love,

¹ Ferre, Christian Understanding of God, op. cit., p. 104.

² George A. Buttrick, So We Believe, So We Pray, (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1951), p. 138.

and love, by its very nature, creates. God creates man in love and for love. To fail to live in love is to be less than we were meant to be. To receive the love of God, to respond to it, to live by it, is to be made whole again. Brunner speaks well to this point.

Every human relationship which does not express love is abnormal. In Jesus Christ we are told that this love is the whole meaning of our life, and is also its foundation. Here the Creator reveals Himself as the One who has created us in love, by love, for love. He reveals to us our true nature, and He gives it back to us.¹

The love which we reject in sin is offered again through Christ.

When man enters into the love of God revealed in Christ he becomes truly human. True human existence is existence in the love of God.... True humanity is not genius but love, that love which man does not possess from or in himself but which he receives from God, who is love. True humanity does not spring from the full development of human potentialities, but it arises through the reception, the perception, and the acceptance of the love of God, and it develops and is preserved by 'abiding' in communion with the God who reveals Himself as Love. Hence separation from God is sin, is the loss of the true human quality, and the destruction of the quality of 'being made in the image of God'. When the heart of man no longer reflects the love of God, but himself and the world, he no longer bears the 'Image of God', which simply consists in the fact that God's love is reflected in the human heart.²

1 Brunner, Divine Imperative, op. cit., p. 296.

2 Brunner, Creation and Redemption, op. cit.,
p. 58 f.

God has a plan for each of his sons. This plan, which begins with creation, includes redemption, the possibility of restored fellowship. If this were not true man's sin, his rejection of God's love, could cause a complete severing of any positive relationship between the Creator and the creature. Actually, the relationship remains positive and creative as God reaches out in love to offer restoration. This is the means by which God creates in man the true humanity which he purposes for him. As, through ignorance or rebellion, man refuses the guidance of agape and follows the leading of his own self-will he moves away from attaining the "mature manhood" which Paul defines as "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). Christ is the measure of full humanity and "we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph. 4:15). God's love, accepted, is of such power that it brings about a new creation. This is the power which transformed Paul and to which he in turn calls others to open up their lives.

Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; they are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart;...You did not so learn Christ! - assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

(Eph. 4:17-24)

Man grows to full humanity only as he receives and accepts the love of God. This love works creatively in him and through him as he responds to it. The woman who bathed the feet of Jesus with tears and anointed them with ointment was not transformed by her own power, but neither was she born anew against her will. Touched by the love of God in Christ, she poured out her own penitence and love in response and found her sins forgiven. "And he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace'" (Lk. 7:50). God's love and man's responding faith recreate the broken fellowship.

Fulfilment of God's Purpose

Obedience is man's positive response to the dictates of agape. Man has no choice but to respond one way or another, for he was created in relationship to God and he cannot sever the relationship.

The fact that man must respond, that he is responsible, is fixed; no amount of human freedom, nor the sinful misuse of freedom, can alter this fact. Man is, and remains, responsible, whatever his personal attitude to his Creator may be. He may deny his responsibility, and he may misuse his freedom; but he cannot get rid of his responsibility. Responsibility is a part of the unchangeable structure of man's being.¹

This is part of what is meant by the statement that man is a child of God, created in the image of God. It is obviously

1 Brunner, Creation and Redemption, op. cit., p. 56 f.

true at the biological level that it is utterly impossible for a man to reject his parentage or to alter it. He may dissociate himself socially from his background, but he cannot escape his biological inheritance. He was born as the son of his parents and the grandson of his grandparents. This fact remains, however much he may protest or deny it. It is true also that the basic bond between the Creator and the creature can be severed only by God's will. God has called forth children in love and his love follows them however long they may wander, blindly or wilfully, in a far country. As soon as the wanderer turns in response to this pursuing love, the way is open not only for his restoration but for love to work creatively in him. Redemption is more than the reestablishment of an earlier condition; it opens the way for man himself to give creative expression to the love of God. It is through both creation and the creative act of redemption that God realizes his purpose for man. Healing is not merely a patching up of the old; it depends on the formation of new tissues. Spiritual healing is also re-creation.

It is not as though redemption was merely the restoration of the creation....The goal which has been shown to us in Jesus Christ is indeed also and first of all the restoration of that which was at the beginning, but it is much more than that; it is the eternal consummation which goes far beyond the Creation. Thus also that which is 'proper' to man, according to the Divine plan of Creation, can

only be understood in the light of the
End which is disclosed in Jesus Christ,
the aim of the Kingdom of God.¹

Sin is not an act, an external offense, from which one can refrain at will. Sin is a basic disorientation, involving the whole person; therefore it is not merely an offense against but an estrangement from the Creator. Sin is man's setting up of his own will in opposition to the will of God. Estranged from God by this self-assertion, man experiences the divine love as wrath and condemnation. The wrath of God is not the opposite of agape; it is the form in which love expresses its uncompromising opposition to evil. This is what Aulen refers to as "the opposition of love whereby love maintains its purity."² The love which condemns is the same as the love which creates and redeems. God does not force man to repentance by chastisement, but by his opposition to evil he reveals his holiness and righteousness and draws rather than drives men toward the fulfilment of his purpose for them.

Man's destiny is not to lose his identity in union with God but rather to enter into communion with his Creator, carrying out the purposes of God through his own selfhood. This is the significance of his having been created as a free creature, capable of response. Freedom

1 Emil Brunner, Man in Revolt, trans. Olive Wyon, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1947), p. 80.

2 Aulen, op. cit., p. 136.

is not a necessary, inherent accompaniment of man's creatureliness; it is God's special gift whereby he makes possible response and fellowship. Man is dependent solely on God for this freedom which is first of all a liberty in orienting to God's will and hence a liberty of thought and action and secondly the freedom of a fellowship through which love can express itself creatively. This is the freedom which is promised if man will respond unreservedly to his Maker; its fulness is seen in Jesus, living in the freedom of perfect love and hence able to heal, to restore, to create, to make new. Salvation does not mean subjection to the bondage of a higher will but release into a greater freedom through communion with that will.

If God had produced a world in which physical and moral evil were impossible, the creatures would not have had the independence of God which is presupposed in the experience of reuniting love. The world would have become a paradise of dreaming innocence, an infant's paradise, but neither love, nor power nor justice would have become real. Actualization of one's potentialities includes, unavoidably, estrangement; estrangement from one's essential being, so that we may find it again in maturity....The power of God is that He overcomes estrangement, not that He prevents it; that He takes it, symbolically speaking, upon Himself, not that He remains in a dead identity with Himself.¹

1 Paul Tillich, Love, Power and Justice, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 112 f.

Agape, being a sovereign force, is able to overcome estrangement and establish a creative communion. This reconciliation involves forgiveness of sin, which is the cause of estrangement, for without forgiveness no true community would be established and community is essential to the free action of agape. Even God's sovereign love acts creatively in human lives only as men respond to it in freedom. "...unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3). Man's freedom is the liberty to turn, to respond. God's love creates, bears fruit, in him through the free community which is established by this response. "You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you" (Jn. 15:3). Forgiveness of sin restores man to fellowship with God. This fellowship is creative to the extent that it remains a true communion of free spirits.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

(Jn. 15:4 f.)

Judgment and Forgiveness

A holy God cannot overlook sin or take it lightly. To do so would be a limitation on his righteousness. God is unalterably opposed to evil in any form. Forgiveness, however, is not a softening of this opposition. Forgiveness condemns the sin even as it frees the sinner.

The gospel stories of the casting out of demons are parables of this truth. Invariably the demon is rebuked and characteristically also it must be torn from the tormented man for the sin has taken possession of the whole man and he cannot put it off lightly by his own power. The episode in the synagogue at Capernaum is typical.

And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 'What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.'

(Mk. 1:23 f.)

God initiates the process by which man is released from possession by the demon, from bondage to sin. He comes to the troubled, ready to heal. Sin, confronted by the divine righteousness, is recognized for what it is. Acknowledgement of God's holiness and the consequent condemnation of sin now help to prepare a man for salvation.

Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.

(v. 24)

God pronounces judgment against sin and exercises his sovereignty over it:

Be silent, and come out of him!

(v. 25)

This act makes no compromise with evil; it is an act of judgment and condemnation. It is an act of love, restoring man to freedom, but it is not accomplished without cost.

And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him.

(v. 26)

Man cannot cast out the demon by himself. He cannot efface his own disobedience and the limitation which this disobedience has placed on his communion with God and hence on his freedom. Sin cannot be discounted. It must be recognized, acknowledged and forgiven. The cleansing is accomplished only by divine authority, for forgiveness is the prerogative of God.

With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.
(v. 27)

It is this forgiveness which accomplishes man's release and frees him into the Kingdom.

But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

(Matt. 12:28)

Forgiveness is no denial of justice for the end of justice is reclamation, not retribution. Love works always to create, to strengthen and to purify, which is to save. Divine justice is an expression of agape; it does not destroy the sinner but transforms him. Forgiveness is no easy discounting of an external offense; it is a means of effecting a real change in man's essential being. God could destroy the sinner, but instead he continues to pursue him with his love, condemning the sin but offering the possibility of return in order that the purpose of creation may be fulfilled in fellowship. Hell, as Ferre points out, "is both the condition and the consequence of the unre-

pentant life."¹ It is an instrument of God's love. Man can be recalled to fellowship only as he comes willingly and freely, setting aside the defiance which is his sin. Hell does not drive a man to heaven; it may awaken him to the consequences of his sin and reveal the freedom which can still be his. This is a part of what is meant by the outwardly shocking statement that the Cross of Christ is a revelation of God's love.

Christians have rightly seen in the crucifixion of Christ not only a manifestation of human loyalty, courage and loving sacrifice, but also a revelation of God's love....Now what will the Father do? Will He send lightning.... Not if He is truly the Father who has been faithfully represented by the teaching and life of Jesus. If He is such a Father He may send an ominous darkness over Calvary which men still later recall as the symbol of His withholding the power He possessed to stop or punish them. But He will not contradict the love revealed through Christ by striking down the sinners in wrathful power. He will wait...suffering in such agony...as only the God who is perfect in understanding love and who loves the torturers too can fully know. He will let sin have its way that sinners may know its meaning through to its fulfillment and that they may learn also the love of God.²

1 Ferre, Christian Understanding of God, op. cit., p. 229.

2 Harold L. DeWolf, A Theology of the Living Church, (New York: Harper & Bros., 1953), p. 265.

Rebirth

Jesus Christ reveals the creative capacity of agape not by discussing it but by actively effecting the transformation of men's lives which comes through forgiveness and reconciliation. "His whole life is the establishment of fellowship between God and man."¹ The man redeemed is enabled to live increasingly in keeping with the purposes of God and to be in turn the instrument of his creative love amongst other men. So Jesus was able to give his disciples "authority over the unclean spirits" (Mk. 6:7). Divine love is creative when it acts on man; it remains creative when it acts through him. If a man turns to God in love, this love will be demonstrated in a creative relationship to his fellow men. Thus agape, working through men, is the force which establishes community. Ideas do not create community though they do draw men together and thus to some extent prepare the way for true community.² The creative force of love rather than social upheaval was responsible for the birth of the Christian church.³ Any such community is creative rather than static. The love of God works through the community to further the divine purpose. This is the eternally creative fellowship of the

1 Brunner, Creation and Redemption, op. cit., p. 337.

2 Brunner, Divine Imperative, op. cit., p. 331.

3 Nygren, op. cit., p. 64.

Creator and his creatures.

It is the nature of agape to produce value in its object; therefore we may assume that all men being equally beloved of God are of equal value in his sight. That which seems valueless in human eyes may, through agape, take on value for God's eternal purposes. God's love taken in Christ to the sick and the sinner visibly confers healing and value. As Nygren points out,¹ Paul underscores the fact that Christ died for the "helpless", "ungodly", "sinners", "enemies" (Rom. 5:6, 8, 10). This spontaneous, unmotivated act of love, accepted, actually re-creates men, making them "new creatures who know for themselves what it is to be children of God."² Rebirth furthers the work of creation as it arouses man to the significance and the responsibility of his sonship. The work of Christ demonstrates the healing and creative power of forgiving love.

When He says, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee', this is no merely formal attestation of the presence of a value which justifies the overlooking of faults; it is the bestowal of a gift. Something really new is introduced, something new is taking place. The forgiveness of sins is a creative work of Divine power (Gr.) which Jesus knows Himself called to carry out on earth, and which can be put on a level with other Divine miracles, such as His healing of the paralytic (Mark ii. 5-12).³

1 Nygren, op. cit., p. 119.

2 Brunner, Creation and Redemption, op.cit., p.336.

3 Nygren, op. cit., p. 80.

Agape transforms the whole life by bringing about a basic reorientation of all of its forces. It changes self-centeredness into God-centeredness, thus freeing the self to develop to its fullest.

Agape means the death, not of the self, but of selfishness; it is the antithesis, not of selfhood, but of self-centeredness, which is the deadliest enemy of true selfhood. Man realises his true self just in so far as he lives by and in Agape. That is what he was created for by God, who is Agape. Man cannot become what he is meant to be, so long as he is self-centered, taken up with himself. He needs to be taken out of himself, out of his cramping preoccupation with himself and his own affairs. And that is precisely what Agape does for him in so far as he accepts it. It delivers him out of the prison of his egocentricity into the glorious liberty of the children of God.¹

Redemption is thus both judgment and creation, death and birth. It enables man to participate in the eternal life of God. This is the meaning of resurrection. "Death is the judgment of God upon human life in its entirety, and resurrection is the renewal of human life, likewise in its entirety, by God's love."² The love of God thus not only transforms history but transcends it, providing the means for the eventual salvation of all. It is through the persistence of love that God carries out the purpose of creation. His Kingdom is formed through his own continuing

¹ A. G. Hebert, translator's preface, Nygren, op. cit., p. xiv, 1937 ed. I.

² Nygren, op. cit., p. 225.

creative act of judgment and salvation.

God's Agape faces man with a decision, an inescapable "Either-Or." Just because Agape means a completely reckless giving, it also demands unlimited devotion. As creative and productive of fellowship, it becomes also an annihilating judgment on the selfish life which will not let itself be re-created into a life of love and refuses the offered fellowship. It is in the presence of the Divine Agape that a man's destiny is ultimately decided. The question is whether he will let himself be won and re-created by God's love, or will resist it, and so encounter it only as a judgment on his life.¹

God's offer of fellowship does not cease, however, and his love continues to pursue man, condemning and reclaiming, until at last man shall turn willingly.

There are no incorrigible sinners; God has no permanent problem children. Heaven...can be heaven only when it has emptied hell.²

The Sovereignty of Love

God's love creates and redeems, eternally. It is the power which calls men into being and which recalls them into the divine fellowship. It is the power which works through men to bring life and health into human relationships. It is the creative force which makes it possible for God's will to be done on earth even as it is in heaven. The life and the resurrection of Jesus Christ bear witness

1 Nygren, op. cit., p. 104.

2 Ferre, Christian Understanding of God, op. cit., p. 229.

to the sovereignty of love over evil and death and to its power to transform life.

If the spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you.
(Rom. 8:11)

God creates in love and his love is sovereign over all creation.

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Rom. 8:38 f.)

CHAPTER VII

LOVE AS THE POWER OF CREATION

A doctrine of creation is essential to an understanding of man and to any consideration of his relationship to God and to his fellowmen. It is also the foundation for a doctrine of salvation.

Men have always inquired into the nature of creation and many theories have been advanced. Some have viewed the universe as the work of a distant creator god who brought the world into being but who has retained no continuing hold on its creatures or their destiny. Some have maintained that God creates and controls his creation by acts of unlimited power. Some have said that creation is a purposeless, playful act, devoid of meaning. The teaching of both the Old and the New Testaments is that creation is a spiritual act by which God calls the universe and its creatures into being. God not only creates but sustains his creation and remains its sovereign Lord, giving it meaning and guiding its ultimate destiny. Creation is not a random, wilful gesture but a purposeful act which expresses the unity and the integrity of God. The Old Testament teaches that the power of creation is the will of God and that man's proper relationship to his Creator is that of obedience. The New Testament doctrine is that God creates

in love and that man is called to sonship, to communion with his Maker.

The purpose of creation is in God. Creation and redemption are joined in his plan. The universe is unified in him not by loss of identity of its components but by the comprehensiveness of the divine purpose. Jesus Christ reveals the nature of this total meaning of life and links creation and redemption as expressions of God's outgoing love. Love is purposive; the meaning of its self-giving inheres in the Giver. Creation is not a necessary act of God, yet God creates because it is the nature of love to create, to give of itself. Creation is possible because love is free. Love always has potentiality.

Created thus in love, man has real freedom, but he is never separated from the love in which he was created. God continues to sustain the universe by his power and to exercise his sovereignty over his creatures through the freedom he has given, not in contradiction to it. God has created men for fellowship with him; hence he has granted the freedom which makes fellowship possible.

Born to be children of God, men share in the divine capacity to create as love works in them and through them. Love is the creative ground of all human relationships. Creative love, responding to need, acts on the object of its concern to restore and to renew. God's love, acting through man, is seen as Christian love for the neighbor. This is the love which fulfills the law, exceeding mere justice by

its creative acts.

God creates in love and calls on his children to live in love with one another and in fellowship with him. Redemption furthers the work of creation as God acts to establish the fellowship which he purposes. Salvation is not a denial of the freedom given in creation, but its fulfilment through release into the wider liberty of life in love.

Love, by its nature, is outgoing, free and creative. The love of God is the power of creation which brings the universe and its creatures into being and which sustains and directs that which it has created. The love of God, working in man, is the power of the Christian ethic. Here also it is an active force, self-giving and creative, exceeding the law. The love of God is the power of redemption, completing the act of creation.

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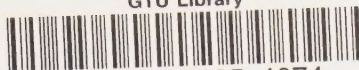
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